MODERNO

The Immortal Brand of a Renaissance Goldsmith

by Michael Riddick

MODERNO

The Immortal Brand of a Renaissance Goldsmith

by Michael Riddick

CONTENTS

Foreword

In his seminal paper, "The Study of Italian Plaquettes," published in 1989, the great art historian Sir John Pope-Hennessy issued a profound challenge to the field. Reflecting on a century of scholarship that had largely stalled, he offered a stark warning: "Of one thing I think we can be absolutely certain, that no progress will be made if study is limited to the making of new catalogues of mixed collections."

Pope-Hennessy lamented what he called the "stamp-collector mentality" adopted by modern museums and collectors, a reductive approach by which each small bronze is judged in total isolation. To truly advance our understanding, he argued, we must abandon this isolated view. "The prime prerequisite," he declared, "is that plaquettes have to be studied against a much wider background of research into other aspects of the applied and graphic arts." More recently, Philippe Malgouyres echoed this exact sentiment in his innovative 2020 catalogue of the Louvre's collection, urging the field to move past static, unverifiable attributions and to finally embrace the complex, collaborative reality of how these "multiples" actually circulated and functioned.

This book is, in many ways, my direct answer to their call.

My own journey into the world of Renaissance bronzes—chronicled over the years through my research and writing at *RenBronze*—has always been driven by an intense desire to look beyond the edges of the bronze itself. To truly understand a plaquette, one must understand the interconnected, highly mobile, and fiercely collaborative world that birthed it. These objects were never conceived in isolation; we must look at the hardstone cameos, the functional desktop inkwells, the silver paxes, the progressive architecture, and the graphic arts that fed into and flowed out of these miniature masterpieces.

There is no artist who demands this holistic, cross-disciplinary approach more than Galeazzo Mondella, the prolific genius we know as "Moderno."

Any modern attempt to resurrect Moderno must first acknowledge the towering bedrock of scholarship laid down by Douglas Lewis. Through his foundational studies in the late 1980s, Lewis brilliantly reconstructed Moderno's medallic and plaquette *oeuvres*, untangled his primary influences, and firmly established his historical identity. Building upon Lewis's essential foundation, this book seeks to expand the narrative outward.

For too long, Moderno has been treated precisely as Pope-Hennessy warned against: as a disembodied name attached to a long, static list of bronze specimens. But when we expand our scope, the man steps out of the shadows. We find a dynamic, peripatetic master whose life and art were inextricably woven into the fabric of the High Renaissance. We trace his footsteps from the goldsmith *apothecas* of Verona to a transformative early excursion in Lombardy, where he absorbed the progressive architectural vocabulary of Bramante and the microscopic precision of the local goldsmithing milieu. We follow him to papal Rome, where he translated the muscular tension of the newly unearthed *Laocoön* and the monumental frescos of Raphael into intimately scaled masterworks. Finally, we see him return

north, leveraging Venetian patrician networks and reuniting with pupils in Milan to synthesize Leonardesque painting into paxes.

By spanning beyond typical plaquette scholarship, we also recover the human networks that defined his career. We see Moderno not as an isolated craftsman, but as the nucleus of a brilliant Veronese enclave, collaborating closely with gem-engravers like Niccolò Avanzi and mentoring prodigious pupils like Matteo del Nassaro.

It is my ambition with this book to break Moderno out of the traditional, rigid catalogue format. By synthesizing archival documents, cross-media analysis, and a rigorous re-evaluation of his geographic timeline, I hope to offer a living, breathing portrait of an artist whose inventions permeated the visual culture of Renaissance Europe.

Pope-Hennessy was right: these small, easily overlooked bronzes are the keys to understanding the true artistic mind of the Renaissance. It is my privilege to invite you on this journey to unlock them.

- Michael Riddick, Renbronze.com

INTRODUCTION

Galeazzo Mondella, operating under the humanist pseudonym "Moderno," was unquestionably the most prolific and arguably the most accomplished artist of the Italian Renaissance bronze plaquette. Producing an expansive *oeuvre* that was frequently reproduced and widely disseminated throughout Europe, his models were appropriated by artists ranging from provincial founders in Padua to grand masters like Michelangelo and Hans Holbein.[1] Yet, despite his profound influence on the visual vocabulary of the sixteenth century, the true identity of the artist behind the ubiquitous "OPVS MODERNI" signature remained one of the most intractable mysteries in Renaissance art historiography for nearly four centuries.[2]

The documentary silence surrounding Moderno was absolute, save for a single, fleeting literary reference. In a manuscript treatise entitled *Da Pintura Antigua* (c. 1549), the Portuguese painter and theorist Francisco de Holanda recorded Moderno as a maker of lead seals (*piombo*), grouping him among the most "celebrated engravers of medals" in Italy alongside the Milanese master Caradosso Foppa, the Vicentine Valerio Belli, and the Florentine Benvenuto Cellini.[3] While this notice confirmed Moderno's elite status as a master glyptic artist and medalist, it provided no biographical anchor, leading nineteenth-century scholars into a labyrinth of speculative attributions.

The systematic study of Moderno's *oeuvre* was inaugurated by Émile Molinier in his foundational 1886 catalogue raisonné, *Les Bronzes de la Renaissance*. Molinier aggregated approximately sixty plaquettes under Moderno's name, astutely recognizing the artist's stylistic debts to Andrea Mantegna and the Paduan school, but ultimately hypothesized that Moderno might be identified with the Venetian sculptor and mint master Vettor di Antonio Gambello, called Camelio.[4] Molinier's theory opened the floodgates for a flurry of competing identifications. Eugène Müntz championed the Roman mint engraver Giovanni Guerino; Eugène Piot argued for the Milanese goldsmith Daniele Arcioni; Gaetano Milanesi, Vincenzo Lazari, and Rizzini proposed the Paduan goldsmith Coreto Cagnoli; while Adolfo Venturi suggested Antonio di Elia.[5]

The most enduring and fiercely debated alternative, however, was first posited by Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri, who argued that "Moderno" was a pseudonym for the illustrious Milanese goldsmith Caradosso Foppa (c. 1452–1526/27).[6] Driven by the undeniable Lombard architectural motifs and Foppesque elements prevalent in Moderno's early works (such as his *Entombment* and *Large St. Sebastian*), the Caradosso hypothesis maintained significant traction. It was subsequently supported by scholars such as Ulrich Middeldorf and Oswald

1 Douglas Lewis, "The Plaquettes of 'Moderno' and His Followers," in ***Italian Plaquettes***, Studies in the History of Art, Vol. 22 (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989), 105–41. Lewis notes that the figure of David's companion in his plaquette of ***David and the Head of Goliath*** was directly borrowed by Michelangelo for one of the prominent angelic assistants in his ***Last Judgment*** fresco in the Sistine Chapel. While this might seem surprising, it is an entirely plausible connection, especially considering that Michelangelo's overarching composition for the ***Last Judgment*** was itself based upon a small bronze medal by his teacher, Bertoldo di Giovanni, see Lewis 1989, 122; for Holbein, see Curt Glaser, "Eine Zeichnung Hans Holbeins," ***Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft*** 2 (1909), 314–316.

2 John Pope-Hennessy, "The Italian Plaquette," ***Proceedings of the British Academy*** 50 (1964), 63–85; reprinted in ***The Study and Criticism of Italian Sculpture*** (New York: Princeton University Press, 1980), 192–222.

3 Francisco de Holanda, ***Da Pintura Antigua*** (1549), Book III. For a transcription and analysis of this passage, see Émile Molinier, ***Les Bronzes de la Renaissance. Les plaquettes***, Vol. 1 (Paris: J. Rouam, 1886), 114; and Lewis, "The Medallic Oeuvre of 'Moderno': His Development at Mantua in the Circle of 'Antico'," in ***Italian Medals***, Studies in the History of Art, Vol. 21 (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1987), 77, 92 n. 2.

4 Molinier, 1886, 1:112–156. Molinier posited that the "C.C." monogram found on some related works might stand for ***Cognomine Camelii***.

5 For a summary of these early attributional theories, see John Pope-Hennessy, ***Renaissance Bronzes from the Samuel H. Kress Collection*** (London: Phaidon Press, 1965), 42; and Molinier 1886, 1:113–116.

6 Francesco Malaguzzi-Valeri's attribution to Caradosso was heavily based on the Lombard architectural features found in Moderno's ***Flagellation*** and ***Presentation in the Temple***. See Pope-Hennessy 1965, 42.

Goetz, and has occasionally resurfaced in modern literature through the assessments of Marco Collareta and Paola Venturelli, who argue that the sheer quality of Moderno's finest silver reliefs points exclusively to the celebrated Caradosso.[7]

The paradigm shift in Moderno scholarship arrived in 1904, delivered in a characteristically succinct, five-line notice in *Kunstchronik* by the formidable German connoisseur and museum director, Wilhelm von Bode.[8] Bode's revelation centered on a specific, highly elaborate bronze pax depicting the *Virgin and Child with Saints Anthony Abbot and Jerome*.

The composition itself was well-known. Several high-quality casts of this pax survive, typically bearing the incised signature "HOC OPVS MODERNI C C" on their reverse (fig. 1).[9] However, a unique variant of this pax surfaced at the London auction of the Alfred Higgins collection at Christie, Manson & Woods on 29 January 1904 (lot 47), where it was purchased for £77.14s by the French collector Paul Garnier.[10]

Notably, the reverse of the Higgins/Garnier pax bore a slightly different, revelatory inscription: "HOC • OPVS • MONDEL • ADER • AVRIFEX • MCCCCXC" (This is the work of Mondel[la]...

Fig. 1: A gilt bronze pax of the *Virgin and Child with Saints Anthony Abbot and Jerome*, formerly in the collection of the Baron of Monville (Thomas Charles Gaston), by Galeazzo Mondella (called Moderno), 1490, and cast by Moderno & Associated Makers, ca. 1528-35 (above); an enlarged detail of the engraved reverse beneath the pax handle (below) (images courtesy De Gurbert Antiques, France).

7 Ulrich Middeldorf and Oswald Goetz, ***Medals and Plaquettes from the Sigmund Morgenroth Collection*** (Chicago, 1944), 33, no. 229. For the modern continuation of the Caradosso hypothesis, see Paola Venturelli, "Cellini, gli orefici milanesi a Roma, Caradosso e Leonardo," in ***Leonardo da Vinci e le arti preziose*** (Venice, 2002), 150-151; and Marco Collareta, "Pace," in ***Maestri della scultura in legno nel ducato degli Sforza*** (Cinisello Balsamo, 2005), 156-157.

8 Wilhelm von Bode, "Funde," ***Kunstchronik*** 15 (1903-1904), 269.

9 Pope-Hennessy 1965, 42, no. 133 (National Gallery of Art, Kress Collection, 1957.14.287). The Victoria and Albert Museum example reads "HOPVS" for OPVS and lacks the "C.C.". See Eric Maclagan, ***Catalogue of Italian Plaquettes*** (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1924), 28.

10 Christie, Manson & Woods, ***A Collection of Objects of Art including... Bronze Plaquettes... formed by Alfred Higgins Esq.***, London, 29 January 1904, 7, lot 47. It was later published by Gaston Migeon, "La collection de M. Paul Garnier," ***Les Arts*** 53 (1906), 24; and sold again at ***Vente Paul Garnier***, Paris, 18-23 December 1916, lot 520.

Goldsmith, 1490).[11] Bode immediately recognized that this inscription untangled the enigma, linking the pseudonym "Moderno" securely to the documented Veronese goldsmith Galeazzo Mondella (1467–1528). The choice of the pseudonym was highly deliberate; operating within the orbit of the Gonzaga court in Mantua, the young Galeazzo almost certainly adopted the moniker "Moderno" to position himself in immediate distinction with his slightly older Mantuan contemporary, Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, who had famously adopted the sobriquet "Antico."[12]

While Bode's identification is now universally accepted by the prevailing scholarship, the Higgins inscription initially presented a perplexing linguistic anomaly. The abbreviation "ADER" confused early scholars, who vainly searched for geographic correlations, mistakenly proposing ties to Aderno (modern-day Adrano) in Sicily—a geographic impossibility for an artist so deeply entrenched in the Veneto-Lombard milieu.[13] The issue was finally resolved in 1975 by Luciano Rognini. Consulting with Ulrich Middeldorf, Rognini persuasively argued that the Christie's cataloguer had simply mistranscribed the inscription from the bronze, and that the text should correctly read "VER" (for *Veronensis*), yielding the perfectly logical: *Hoc Opus Mondella Veronensis Aurifex 1490*.[14]

This breakthrough inherently demanded a reevaluation of the companion inscription, "HOC OPVS MODERNI C C", found on the standard casts. If Mondella was the primary author, what did the "C C" signify? As deciphered by Virginia Woods Callahan and Douglas Lewis, the "C C" stands for *Comites Confectores* (associated makers).[15] This critical translation finds its definitive proof in the recent documents highlighted by the present author concerning the extended Mondella family. Following Galeazzo's death in 1528, his son Giambattista formed a documented commercial syndicate with his Brescian cousins: Giovanni Maria, Giovanni Battista and Luigi Mondella.[16] The "Moderno C C" paxes are therefore the product of this multi-generational partnership, representing posthumous aftercasts wherein Galeazzo's heirs proudly chased their "associated" trademark onto the reverse of their uncle's 1490 masterpiece, effectively monetizing his legacy and disseminating his designs throughout northern Italy.[17]

Rognini's subsequent, exhaustive archival excavations firmly grounded Galeazzo's biographical timeline in Verona.[18] By uniting the physical evidence of the Higgins pax with the civic records of the Veronese goldsmiths' guild, the historiographical debate was definitively settled: the elusive "Moderno" was Galeazzo Mondella, an artist who was not a sudden, isolated phenomenon, but the scion of an established Veronese dynasty

11 Bode 1904, 269; Lewis 1987, 92 n. 4; Alessandro Barbieri, "Il Reliquiario della Santissima Croce del tesoro del Duomo Vecchio di Brescia," ***Arte Lombarda*** 164-165 (2012), 42-43.

12 Davide Gasparotto, "Antico e Moderno," in ***Bonacolsi l'Antico: Uno scultore nella Mantova di Andrea Mantegna e di Isabella d'Este*** (Milan: Electa, 2008), 89-97.

13 Early cataloguers expanded "ADER" to "Aderno" (Adrano), a town in Sicily. See U.S. Department of Interior, ***Gazetteer of Italian Geographic Names*** (Washington, D.C., 1956), 3; and Lewis 1989, 135 n. 103.

14 Luciano Rognini, "Galeazzo e Girolamo Mondella artisti del Rinascimento veronese," ***Atti e Memorie della Accademia di Agricoltura Scienze e Lettere di Verona***, s. VI, XXV (1975), 105-106. Rognini credited Ulrich Middeldorf with suggesting this paleographic correction.

15 Lewis 1989, 136 n. 106. Lewis credits Professor Virginia Woods Callahan for formulating the expansion of "C C" to ***Comites Confectores***.

16 Barbieri 2012, 42. Following Galeazzo's death in 1528, his son Giovanni Battista Mondella formed a mercantile society with his cousins (the sons of Antonio Donato Mondella) operating out of Brescia. See also Michael Riddick, Moderno & Associated Makers – A Partnership Between Galeazzo Mondella's Son and Nephews (2023a), Renbronze.com.

17 Walter Cupperi, ***Pinacoteca Civica di Vicenza. Scultura e arti applicate dal XIV al XVIII secolo*** (Milan, 2005), 213-214, no. 241; see also Riddick 2023a. Cupperi observed that the inscriptions are chased directly into the metal on finer casts, whereas they are integrally cast on debased aftercasts.

18 Rognini 1975, 95-119. Galeazzo Mondella is documented in the Veronese ***estimi*** (tax records) and served as the ***massaro*** (steward) of the Veronese goldsmiths' guild in 1496-1497 and again in 1506-1507.

whose influence would eventually bridge the Alps.

If the archival unmasking of Galeazzo Mondella resolved the enduring mystery of his identity, it simultaneously opened a far more complex inquiry into his intellectual character and the functional mechanics of his workshop. Moderno was not only a highly skilled *aurifex* (goldsmith) operating as a passive conduit for the transmission of antique motifs but was also a deeply engaged participant in the humanist discourse of the Renaissance.[19]

The very adoption of the pseudonym "Moderno" was a calculated intellectual manifesto. As a young artist circulating within the refined, antiquarian orbit of the Gonzaga court in Mantua, Galeazzo positioned himself in direct dialogue with Antico. Rather than fierce rivals, as Lewis has persuasively argued, the two sculptors were probably respectful peers—and likely close colleagues or even collaborators—whose interconnected "trade" names reflected a shared, dualistic approach to the humanist revival of classical antiquity.[20] However, while Antico's self-fashioning proclaimed a desire to resurrect and equal the traditional beauty of the Greco-Roman past, Galeazzo's choice of "Moderno" proudly asserted a progressive aesthetic agenda. He sought to capture the essence of his own time—infusing classical vocabularies with a contemporary vitality and an awareness of esoteric, Neoplatonic currents (tied to the philosophical orbit of Marsilio Ficino) that would resonate into future epochs.[21]

To fully chart this intellectual and artistic trajectory, the present study deploys a multifaceted methodology, integrating rigorous documentary analysis, formal stylistic critique, and technical material examination.

First, the book leverages a granular analysis of archival sources to reconstruct the dynamic, multi-generational Mondella *ditta* (family workshop). By examining civic tax registers (*estimi*), guild records, and newly interpreted notarial documents spanning Verona, Mantua, and Brescia, we can move beyond the isolated figure of Galeazzo to define the highly specialized division of labor that powered the family enterprise.[22] This documentary approach allows us to strategically isolate the distinct stylistic hands of his brothers—such as the older, traditionally trained goldsmith Lancillotto, or the celebrated portraitist Girolamo—who shared access to the family's master matrices and contributed to the wider "Moderno" corpus.[23]

Second, this study traces Galeazzo's stylistic evolution chronologically, weaving the significant components of his *oeuvre* into the narrative of his travels and patronage networks. We will follow his trajectory from an emotive "première manière" heavily indebted to Andrea Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, *et al*, through a later undocumented period in Lombardy, and finally to the zenith of his High Renaissance Roman classicism, marked by his direct quotation of the newly excavated *Laocoön*.[24]

19 For Moderno's humanistic culture and the sophisticated intellectual milieu of his native Verona, see Rognini 1975, 95-119; and B. Chiappa, "Nuovi documenti sugli orefici Mondella e in particolare sulla produzione artistica di Galeazzo," in ***Una vita per i musei, atti della giornata di studio in ricordo di Lanfranco Franzoni***, ed. M. Bolla (Verona, 2016), 107-119.

20 D. Lewis, 1987. For the interplay of their titles, see also D. Gasparotto, "Antico e Moderno," in ***Bonacolsi l'Antico: Uno scultore nella Mantova di Andrea Mantegna e di Isabella d'Este*** (Milan: Electa, 2008), 89-97.

21 The assertion of Moderno's intent to capture his contemporary zeitgeist under the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy is discussed in Sandro Ubertazzi, "A proposito di un gruppo di paci derivate da una Pietà del Moderno," ***Antiqua nuova serie*** (2025). Ubertazzi connects Moderno's ideological framework directly to the esotericism of Marsilio Ficino.

22 Riddick 2023a. Following Moderno's death in 1528, his son Giambattista formed a documented syndicate with the Brescian branch of the family (led by Giovanni Maria Mondella) to exploit his models.

23 The necessity of disentangling the hands within the Mondella family workshop (***bina aurificum***) is supported by Rognini 1975, 100-104. Girolamo is documented as a painter and goldsmith with connections to the Este court, while Lancillotto, as the eldest brother, inherited the primary workshop's tools and master drawings.

24 For the stylistic evolution of Moderno and his use of the ***Laocoön*** (discovered in 1506), see E. Gagetti, "Das Höchste dieser Art: Laocoonte in miniatura," ***La statuaria di marmo: La sfida dell'antico*** (2007), 153-155; and D. Lewis, 1989.

In doing so, this book also systematically confronts the thorny historiography of the anonymous masters traditionally clustered in his orbit—such as the "Coriolanus Master," the "Lucretia Master," "The Master of the Herculean Labors," and the "Master of the Orpheus and Arion Roundels." Through close stylistic and circumstantial analysis, this study will dismantle these pseudonymous constructions, reattributing key works either back to Moderno himself, to his brothers, or to the early experimentations of his documented pupil, the renowned gem-engraver Matteo del Nassaro.[25]

Finally, the methodology is rooted in material and technical analysis. Galeazzo's genius lay in his mastery of the "haptic Renaissance"—the creation of tactile objects meant to be handled, scrutinized, and exchanged. The book examines his hierarchy of production, contrasting the bespoke, bravura silver-gilt masterworks commissioned by elite patrons with the lucrative, serial production of bronze plaquettes utilizing indirect casting methods.[26] By exploring the cross-pollination of his models across media—from wax models and carved hardstones to monumental marble architecture and printed paper—we reveal how Galeazzo Mondella transformed the Renaissance bronze matrix into a highly mobile, multi-generational asset.[27]

Ultimately, this book seeks to present Moderno in his totality: an ambitious Veronese patrician, a master lapidary, a pioneer of the serial multiple, and a humanist thinker whose metallic imprint fundamentally shaped the visual vocabulary of sixteenth-century Europe.

25 For the complex historiography of Moderno's followers and the pseudonymous masters, see E. Bange, *Die Italienischen Bronzen der Renaissance und des Barock, Zweiter Teil: Reliefs und Plaketten* (Berlin, 1922), 59–73; and M. Riddick, "Proposing Matteo del Nassaro as the Master of the Orpheus and Arion Roundels," Renbronze.com (2024a) and "Reapproaching the Coriolanus Master," *Renbronze.com* (2025). Vasari specifically records Matteo del Nassaro as Moderno's pupil in gem-engraving: G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori*, ed. G. Milanesi (Florence, 1880), 5:375–376.

26 M. T. Franco, "La Flagellazione del Moderno per il 'nobilissimo studiolo' Grimani," *Ricche Minere* 17 (2022), 33–53. Franco details the exceptional quality of Moderno's silver casts, utilizing indirect lost-wax casting, specifically the *Flagellation* and *Sacra Conversazione* commissioned by Cardinal Domenico Grimani.

27 Moderno's models were frequently circulated and adapted during his lifetime. See C. M. Brown, "The Archival Scholarship of Antonino Bertolotti: The Galeazzo Mondella (Moderno) Model for a Diamond Saint George Brooch," *Artibus et Historiae* 18, no. 35 (1997), 65–71, for the documentation of Moderno's wax models passing through the hands of Venetian jewelers.

I.

FORGING THE DYNASTY

Fig. 2: The Verona amphitheater, ca. 30 AD.

Understanding the genesis of Galeazzo Mondella's artistic identity requires a cursory overview of the specific political and cultural topography of his native city during the second half of the fifteenth century. Following the turbulent decline of the Scaligeri dynasty and brief, chaotic subjugations by the Visconti of Milan and the Carraresi of Padua, Verona was officially absorbed into the *Domini di Terraferma* of the Venetian Republic in 1405.[28] This *dedizione* (submission) to the Serenissima inaugurated a prolonged period of political stability, precipitating a dramatic demographic and economic resurgence. Archival tax registers and census records (*anagrafi*) reveal that Verona's population, which hovered around 15,000 at the dawn of the Quattrocento, swelled to over 41,000 by 1502, effectively making it the second largest and wealthiest city in the Veneto after Venice itself.[29]

Despite its political subjugation to the lagoon city, Verona fiercely maintained its own distinct civic identity, anchored not in maritime commerce, but in its profound, tangible connection to Roman antiquity. Due to its strategic geographical position—often lauded as the "porta d'Italia" (door of Italy)—Verona had been a vital Roman stronghold.[30] By the fifteenth century, the city still boasted a staggering concentration of visible, monumental Roman ruins that rivalled Rome itself. The great Amphitheater (the Arena) (fig. 2), the Teatro Romano carved into the Colle di San

28 For the political transition of Verona and the ***dedizione*** of 1405, see John Easton Law, ***The Commune of Verona Under Venetian Rule from 1405 to 1455*** (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1974); and M. Knapton, "Venice and the terraferma," in ***The Italian Renaissance State***, eds. A. Gamberini and I. Lazzarini (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 132-146.

29 Amelio Tagliaferri, ***L'economia veronese secondo gli estimi dal 1409 al 1635*** (Milan: Giuffrè, 1966), 41-58. Verona's population grew from an estimated 15,000–20,100 in the early 1400s to 42,071 by 1502.

30 For the strategic and military perception of Verona as the "porta d'Italia," see M. Melchiorre, ***Conoscere per governare. Le relazioni dei Sindici Inquisitori e il dominio veneziano di terraferma (1543-1626)*** (Ladispoli: Forum, 2013); and N. Cenni and M.F. Coppari, ***I segni della Verona veneziana (1505-1620)*** (Verona: Cassa di risparmio di Verona, 1990), 10-13.

Pietro, the Arco dei Gavi, and the monumental gates of Porta Borsari and Porta Leoni dominated the urban fabric.[31] This omnipresent classical architecture generated a pervasive local mythos; Veronese humanists proudly referred to their city as a "second Rome" (*sorella dell'Urbe*) and a "Minor Hierusalem."[32]

This physical environment was highly consequential for the visual arts. The ruins served as an open-air academy, providing a direct encounter with antiquity that deeply influenced passing masters like Jacopo Bellini and Andrea Mantegna (whose *San Zeno Altarpiece* of 1456–1459 radically altered the local artistic landscape), as well as indigenous Veronese artists.[33] It was within this specific crucible—a wealthy, rapidly expanding city obsessed with its classical pedigree—that the humanist culture of Quattrocento Verona flourished. The city became widely celebrated as a "mater et alumna... doctissimorum hominum" (mother and nurse of highly learned men), fostering an elite network of patrician collectors, poets, and antiquarians.[34]

No single figure encapsulates this Veronese antiquarian zeitgeist quite like the eminent jurist, humanist, and historian, Torello Sarayna (c. 1475–1550) (fig. 3). Operating at the nexus of the city's legal and cultural spheres, Sarayna was

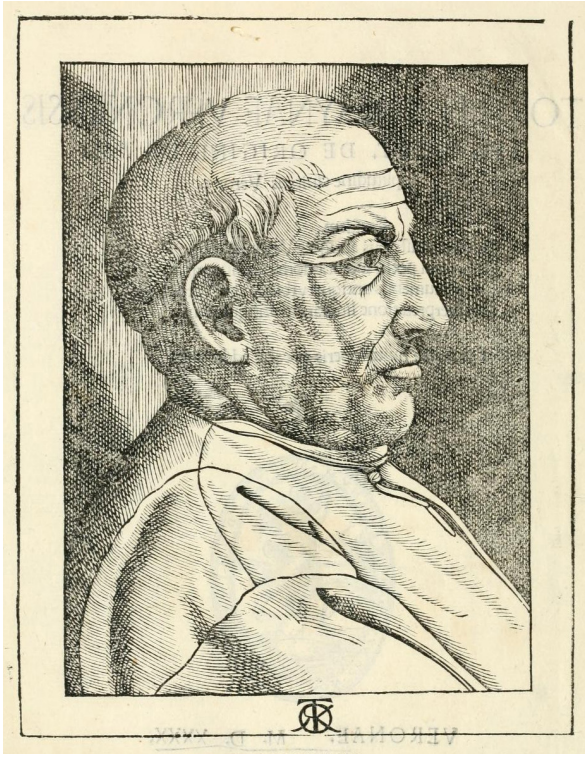

Fig. 3: Woodcut profile portrait of Torello Sarayna from *De origine et amplitudine ciuitatis Veronae..,* 1540 (Veronae : Ex officina Antonii Putelletti).

a tireless champion of Verona's classical heritage. His seminal treatise, *De origine et amplitudine civitatis Veronae*—published in 1540 but conceived much earlier—was the first comprehensive, printed catalog of the city's antiquities.[35] Sarayna recognized that literary description alone was insufficient to capture the grandeur of the Roman past; he commissioned the prominent Veronese painter and architect Giovanni Caroto to meticulously measure and illustrate the ruins, resulting in woodcut engravings that codified the Veronese classical vocabulary for generations of subsequent artists and architects, including Andrea

31 G. Tosi, "Verona Romana. I monumenti romani di Verona nella tradizione letteraria veronese del Cinquecento," in ***Palladio e Verona***, ed. P. Marini (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1980), 33-84; and M. Bolla, ***Verona Romana*** (Sommacampagna: Cierre edizioni, 2014), 9.

32 The "Minor Hierusalem" epithet stems from the civic seal adopted in 1474. See Cenni and Coppari 1990, 13; and Bolla 2014, 9, noting the mid-fifth-century origins of the parallelism between Verona and Rome.

33 P. Kristeller, ***Andrea Mantegna*** (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901), 168-169; and H. Burns, "Le antichità di Verona e l'architettura del Rinascimento," in ***Palladio e Verona***, ed. P. Marini (Venice: Neri Pozza, 1980), 103-117.

34 The phrase "mater et alumna... doctissimorum hominum" was famously utilized by the humanist publisher Aldus Manutius in his dedication to Battista Guarini. See G. Bottari, ***Prime ricerche su Giovanni Antonio Panteo*** (Messina, 2003), 38-39; and R. Avesani, "La cultura veronese agli inizi della dominazione veneta," in ***Verona e il suo territorio***, Vol. IV (Verona, 1984), 5-30.

35 Torello Sarayna, ***De origine et amplitudine civitatis Veronae. Eiusdem De viris illustribus antiquis Veronensibus*** (Verona: Antonio Putelletti, 1540). For recent critical editions, see J.M. Dominguez Leal, ***Torello Saraina, Origen y engrandecimiento de la ciudad de Verona*** (Zaragoza: Instituto de Estudios Humanisticos, 2006).

Palladio and Sebastiano Serlio.[36]

In addition to chronicling the past, Sarayna was also an active patron and legal advocate who moved intimately within the same artisanal and patrician circles as the Mondella family. His involvement in the local art world was extensive: in 1520 he acted as a guarantor for the sculptor Francesco da Castello, and he later commissioned his own family chapel in the church of San Fermo Maggiore, adorned with frescoes by Francesco Torbido.[37]

Most critically for our narrative, Sarayna maintained a direct, personal patronal relationship with Galeazzo during the artist's lifetime. A recently published notarial contract dated 6 November 1524 records Galeazzo officially agreeing to execute several sculptural works for the Confraternity of the Conception (*Società della Concezione*) based in the Veronese church of San Fermo Maggiore. The contract stipulated the creation of four figures of Saints James, John, Catherine, and Lucy, as well as two figures of the Virgin carved in fine marble (*"de bono et pulchro marmore"*). The confraternity's representative who personally secured Galeazzo's services and acted as its steward for this commission was none other than the humanist notary, Torello Sarayna.[38]

This direct relationship continued into the next generation. Following Galeazzo's death in 1528, the artist's son, Giambattista Mondella, entered a lucrative but ultimately fraught mercantile syndicate with his Brescian cousins (the jeweler nephews of Galeazzo) to exploit the family's assets and models. When this cross-city partnership collapsed into a bitter legal dispute over a massive debt of 1,000 ducats, the Brescian nephews—Giovanni Maria and Luigi Mondella—required a formidable legal mind to aggressively pursue their Veronese cousin. On 12 March 1536, they officially appointed none other than Torello Sarayna as their legal procurator (*procuratore*).[39]

Sarayna's dual role as the preeminent exponent of Veronese classical antiquity and the legal representative embroiled in the dissolution of the Mondella syndicate perfectly illustrates the interconnectedness of Renaissance Verona. The humanist scholars who philosophized over Roman ruins and the master goldsmiths who translated those antiquities into bronze plaquettes were not operating in isolated spheres; they were neighbors, business partners, and litigants bound together by the same civic fabric. It was precisely this highly literate, classically obsessed, and commercially vibrant milieu that nurtured the young Galeazzo Mondella, providing both the visual vocabulary and the intellectual justification for him to eventually cast aside his family name and stamp his bronzes with the bold, humanist moniker: *Moderno*.

Galeazzo did not emerge *ex nihilo* from the Veronese artisan class; rather, he was the scion of a deeply entrenched and highly influential patrician-artisan dynasty. The true extent of the Mondella family's institutional power within the city is vividly illuminated by their multi-generational control over the Veronese Goldsmiths' Guild (*Arte degli Orefici*). The guild's spiritual and administrative epicenter

36 G. Schweikhart, ***Le antichità di Verona di Giovanni Caroto*** (Verona, 1977); and A. Zamperini, "I Caroto e fra Giovanni da Verona," in ***Le vite dei Veronesi di Giorgio Vasari. Un'edizione critica***, eds. M. Molteni and P. Artoni (Treviso, 2013), 69-83.

37 Archivio di Stato di Verona (ASVr), ARV, b. 31, fasc. Actorum sextus and b. 38, fasc. Actorum quintus (24 September 1527), detailing Sarayna's legal patronage of artists. For his chapel, see P. Brugnoli, "Intorno a due cappelle dedicate alla Madonna: i Banda e i della Torre," in ***I Santi Fermo e Rustico. Un culto e una chiesa in Verona***, eds. P. Golinelli and C. Gemma Brenzoni (Verona, 2004), 289-293.

38 Chiappa 2016, 118-121. The document is preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Verona (ASVr), Pubblico Archivio dei Notai Defunti, b. 389 (not. Ivani Giovanni e G. Battista), prot. 3. The text notes: ***"Egregius vir Galeatius quondam egregii Aluisii de Mondellis... convenit egregio Torello notario de Sarainis, massario societatis Conceptionis Beate Marie Virginis fundate in ecclesia Sancti Firmi Verone..."***

39 Camillo Boselli, ***Regesto artistico dei notai roganti in Brescia dall'anno 1500 al 1560*** (Brescia, 1977), I: 205. The document notes: "1536, 12 Marzo... Exc. artis et Medicinae doctor Aloysius et Jo Maria aurifex fratres q Donati de Mondellis nominano Torello Saraino loro procuratore nella causa contro G. Battista Mondella orafo veronese loro debitore di duc. 1000 per una società mercantile." See also Barbieri 2012, 42-43.

was the hospital and church of Santa Maria della Misericordia, a complex that would later become synonymous with the guild's patron saint, Sant'Eligio (or Sant'Alò).[40]

A documentary discovery regarding this institution perfectly anchors the Mondella family's early dominance over the guild. The records of a pastoral visit conducted by the eminent Bishop Ermolao Barbaro on 18 May 1455 provide a rare glimpse into the internal hierarchy of the *Arte*. During his inspection of the hospital, the bishop formally interrogated the acting *massaro*—the executive leader and treasurer of the guild—regarding the original acquisition of the property. The archival text records that the *massaro* who answered the bishop's inquiries was none other than Ambrogio, son of Taddeo de Mondellis.[41]

This mid-Quattrocento revelation constitutes a major biographical breakthrough for our understanding of Galeazzo. As established by civic tax and guild records, Galeazzo served two terms in this exact same executive role, acting as the *massaro* of the Veronese goldsmiths' guild in 1496–1497 and again a decade later in 1506–1507.[42] Discovering his ancestor, Ambrogio de Mondellis, wielding the identical executive title half a century earlier proves that Galeazzo's rise to prominence was not merely a product of his individual merit as a humanist craftsman. Rather, he inherited a formidable apparatus of civic and mercantile power, backed by a family that exerted an almost dynastic, multi-generational authority over the Veronese luxury economy.

This deeply rooted institutional authority allowed the Mondella brothers to leave their literal imprint not only on bronze and silver but on the very fabric of the guild's sacred spaces. This is most spectacularly evidenced by the complex history of the guild's altarpiece commission for the church of Sant'Eligio, an enterprise that allowed the family to seamlessly blend civic duty with personal memorialization.

Archival excavations by Rognini, which successfully amended the earlier nineteenth-century findings of Giuseppe Biadego, have clarified the granular timeline of this commission.[43] During his first tenure as *massaro* in 1496–1497, Galeazzo initiated a contract with the prominent Veronese painter Antonio Badile the Elder to execute two altarpieces for the church. However, Galeazzo's ambitious vision was initially met with resistance and "obstruction by the members of the Guild" (*ostacolata dai componenti dell'Arte*).[44]

The project was temporarily stalled, only to be resumed and finalized in August 1497, with the final payment rendered in December 1498. Notably, the *massaro* who stepped in to close out the commission and oversee the final balance in 1498 was Galeazzo's older brother, the celebrated goldsmith and painter Girolamo Mondella.[45] The

40 M. Fabris, "Le chiese e gli ospedali degli orefici a Verona," ***Studi Veronesi. Miscellanea di studi sul Rinascimento***, Vol. 2 (2017), 20. The complex, originally dedicated to Santa Maria della Misericordia, progressively became associated with Sant'Eligio as the goldsmiths' devotion to their patron saint overshadowed the original dedication.

41 The record of Bishop Ermolao Barbaro's pastoral visit on 18 May 1455 documents his interrogation of the acting ***massaro***, Ambrogio, son of Taddeo de Mondellis, regarding the guild's property acquisition. This establishes the Mondella family's executive presence in the guild fifty years prior to Galeazzo's tenure.

42 Rognini 1975, 101-102.

43 Ibid., 100, correcting G. Biadego, "L'arte degli orefici in Verona," ***Memorie dell'Accademia di agricoltura, arti e commercio di Verona***, LXVI (1891), 95. Biadego had initially misattributed the initiation of the contract to Girolamo due to a misreading of the damaged guild registers.

44 Rognini 1975, 100. The documents note that the 1496-1497 commission by Galeazzo was ***"ostacolata dai componenti dell'Arte"*** before being resumed under his successor.

45 Fabris 2017, 26; Rognini 1975, 100. The balance for the work was paid in 1498 during Girolamo Mondella's term as ***massaro***.

Fig. 4 (facing page): Panel painting of the *Pieta* by Antonio Badile the Elder, 1498, for the Church of Sant'Eligio, Verona (private collection). The figure of St. Jerome (far-right) is a crypto-portrait of Girolamo Mondella.

completed works included an altarpiece featuring specific saints dictated by the guild officials, and another destined for the bell tower area featuring a *Pietà* (fig. 4).[46]

Through their successive executive tenures, the Mondella brothers successfully managed to immortalize one of their own likenesses within the completed Badile commission. The surviving predella panels and fragments of the main altarpiece reveal a highly specific, personalized insertion: the figure of Saint Jerome (*San Girolamo*), depicted both in the main panel (fig. 4) and the predella (fig. 5, right), is recognized as a direct, namesake portrait of Girolamo Mondella himself, perfectly coinciding with his role as the presiding *massaro* at the time of the work's completion.[47]

Fascinatingly, the visual treatment of Girolamo-as-Jerome in the Badile predella superficially recalls the intense, penitential compositions of Saint Jerome that circulated in the bronze plaquettes produced by Galeazzo. Furthermore, the physiognomic character of Girolamo's painted effigy shares a striking familial resemblance with the prominent bronze soldier wielding a Medusa-head shield in Galeazzo's *Crucifixion* plaquette (fig. 5). Positioned in the foreground of the relief, this specific soldier notably breaks the fourth wall, staring directly and emphatically out at the viewer. Because of this intense immediacy, Pietro Cannata has suggested that the figure (perhaps acting as Longinus) represents a hidden self-portrait of

Fig. 5: Detail of a proposed self-portrait of Galeazzo Mondella (called Moderno) on a bronze plaquette of the *Crucifixion*, ca. 1485-87 (National Gallery of Art, inv. 1957.14.294; left); Detail of a panel painting of the *Penitent Jerome* by Antonio Badile the Elder, 1498, for the predella of the Church of Sant'Eligio, Verona (private collection). The figure of St. Jerome is a crypto-portrait of Girolamo Mondella (right).

Galeazzo.[48] The shared facial structure between Badile's painted portrait of Girolamo and the bronze soldier provides compelling visual evidence to reinforce Cannata's hypothesis, suggesting that Galeazzo cast his own likeness into his masterwork just as he preliminarily orchestrated his brother's painted portrait for the guild's altarpiece.

To fully comprehend Galeazzo's genius we must dismantle the nineteenth-century romanticization of the solitary artist and instead examine the highly collaborative, mercantile reality of the Renaissance *bottega*. The Mondella family enterprise (*ditta*) operated as a sophisticated syndicate,

46 E. M. Guzzo, "Risarcimento di Antonio Badile," ***Arte Cristiana***, LXXXI (1993), 200-202; and E. M. Guzzo, ***Ricerche sul Rinascimento veronese: Antonio Badile, Michele, Girolamo dai Libri*** (2008), 350. The August 1497 contract specified an ***"anchona a man dritta con 3 figure de sancte"*** and another panel ***"con la pietà e con figure li dirà li soprascritti ofiziali"*** [with figures the aforementioned officials will tell him]. As Guzzo notes, this open-ended contractual clause allowed the guild's successive executives (the Mondella brothers) to dictate the specific inclusion of namesake saints that reflected their own personal identities.

47 Fabris 2017, 26, noting that the figure of Saint Jerome in both the altarpiece and the predella can easily be referred to the ***massaro*** of 1498, the famous goldsmith ***"maestro Hieronimo Mondela"***. See also Guzzo 2008, who supports this patronal identification.

48 P. Cannata, ***Rilievi e placchette del XV al XVIII secolo, Roma***. Museo di Palazzo Venezia, Roma (1982), no. 27, 50-51. Jeremy Warren notes the composition's "emphatic immediacy" and highlights Cannata's proposal that the foreground soldier with the Medusa shield staring out at the viewer is a self-portrait of Moderno. See J. Warren, ***Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture in the Ashmolean Museum, Vol. 3: Plaquettes*** (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum Publications, 2014), 844, nos. 298-299. The present author notes if this is Moderno's self-portrait, the Medusa shield serves as the perfect prop identifying him as an expert in classical Roman forms while characterizing him within the narrative as the witnessing Roman centurion: symbolically contrasting the blindness of the ancient pagan world with the new Christian truth unfolding on the cross.

wherein the diverse talents of four brothers—from Lancillotto's traditional goldsmithing to Antonio Donato's gem trading—were strategically leveraged.

The granular mechanics of this family workshop are brilliantly illuminated by the archival records surrounding its reorganization in January 1496. While their father, Luigi, had passed away decades earlier (c. 1473–1477), the brothers remained intertwined until they convened to formally divide the dowry of their mother, Iacoba, and reorganize the family's assets—which included lands in Castelrotto and a 'treasure' of pearls and jewels valued at a substantial 448 gold ducats.[49]

This settlement formalized a calculated division of labor and capital. Lancillotto, as the eldest brother ("*il maggiore dei fratelli*"), had already rightfully inherited the physical locus of the primary family workshop, along with all the working tools and the master drawings ("*omnia ordegna, utensilia... et omnia designia et designamenta*") bequeathed by their father and uncle, Giacomino, decades prior.[50] During this 1496 reorganization, Lancillotto and Girolamo elected to remain together as a unified commercial entity, jointly running the primary workshop, while Galeazzo and Donato took their shares of the capital and split off to establish their own independent operations.[51]

The commercial acumen of the family was formidable. Archival notices reveal their highly advanced mercantile strategies—such as Girolamo's 1506 petition to the city council to set up a wheeled display stand outside his shop.[52] This early, highly innovative concept of "visual merchandising," designed to capture the attention of passing patricians and merchants, evinces the exact entrepreneurial spirit that Galeazzo himself would soon apply to the serial production of bronzes.

Within the historiography of Renaissance art, Girolamo Mondella (active 1480s–d. 1512) has largely been delegated to the field of painting, with scholars frequently ignoring his official, documented title of *aurifex* (goldsmith). Contemporary literary sources certainly celebrated his pictorial skills; the humanists Antonio Tebaldeo and Giovanni Lagarini composed eulogizing verses for a portrait Girolamo painted of the poetess Laura Brenzoni Schioppo, and Pierio Valeriano celebrated his portrait of Girolamo Verità.[53] However, Girolamo was equally embedded in the civic and physical production of the goldsmiths' guild. As noted previously, he succeeded Galeazzo to serve as the *massaro* of the *Arte degli Orefici* in 1498, closing out the Badile altarpiece commission and securing his own likeness within it (figs. 4, 5).[54]

Recognizing Girolamo's dual identity as both a painter and a master goldsmith provides a compelling solution to one of the most debated pseudonymous identities in the plaquette corpus associated with Moderno: the Master of the Herculean Labors.[55] Traditionally localized

49 For the family tree establishing Luigi's death by 1477, see Rognini 1975, 95–119. For the January 1496 settlement dividing the mother Iacoba's dowry, the Castelrotto lands, and the "tesoretto" of pearls and jewels valued at 448 gold ducats, see the three acts drafted by the notary Marco Somaglia (ASVr, PAND, b. 177, fasc. 2, cc. 7, 11, 14).

50 For Giacomino Mondella's death and testament in 1458, see the family genealogy reconstructed by Rognini 1975, 110.

51 The 1496 acts distinguish Antonio Donato as a ***zogielerius***, while the other brothers are labeled ***aurifices***. Following this division, Lancillotto and Girolamo maintained a joint ***fraterna*** and rented a house together in San Vitale in 1497, while Antonio Donato moved to Brescia and Galeazzo remained in Santa Maria in Organo, traveling intermittently.

52 Girolamo submitted the petition in 1506 to display a wheeled, glass-fronted case (***vetrinetta***) outside his bottega in San Salvaro, arguing it was necessary "for his convenience and the satisfaction of the people who flock to his shop every day." The city council discussed the request on April 21, 1507, but rejected it 36 to 15 to avoid blocking public space. See G. Biadego 1891, 89; and Guzzo 2008, 350.

53 For Girolamo's activity as a painter and his praise by Tebaldeo and Valeriano, see Rognini 1975, 102–104; and A. M. Bresciani, ***La pittura in Verona*** (Verona, 1586), who early on noted his dual proficiency.

54 Fabris 2017, 26.

55 For the historiography of the Master of the Herculean Labors,

to Mantua or Lombardy around 1500, this anonymous master—proposed here as Girolamo Mondella—is responsible for a highly distinct suite of three plaquettes: *The Infant Hercules Strangling the Serpents* (fig. 6), *Hercules and the Lernean Hydra*, and *Hercules and Antaeus* (fig. 7).

Unlike Galeazzo's crisp, emphatically sculptural approach and his adept use of classical architectural backgrounds, Girolamo's works are defined by a distinct "painterly intuition" that favors atmospheric depth and fluid modeling, often setting his subjects against flat grounds. His individual manner is characterized by a subtly awkward foreshortening and an emphasis on tense musculature, particularly noticeable in his knobby or bulbous knees. Perhaps his most apparent hallmark is the thick, bulbous brow featured prominently on his male subjects. Furthermore, Girolamo occasionally employs an alternative, more "stringy" hair type—leaving more negative space between coiled strands—a stylistic approach that seems to anticipate the later works of Matteo del Nassaro. Ultimately, these reliefs prioritize pictorial composition over strict plasticity, qualities that perfectly align with a goldsmith whose primary renown was in painting.

The dynamic tension in the figures heavily relies on the pioneering anatomical studies of Antonio Pollaiuolo (specifically his own *Labors of Hercules* canvases for the Medici). Past scholarship has frequently argued that the extreme, pathos-filled contortions and writhing serpents found within the Master's *Infant Hercules* and *Lernean Hydra* reliefs echo the Hellenistic *Laocoön*. Consequently, scholars have traditionally used the statue's momentous discovery in Rome in January 1506 as a strict *terminus post quem* for the suite.[56]

originally grouped with Moderno by Molinier and Bange, but later separated by Pope-Hennessy, see Pope-Hennessy 1965, 52–53.

56 The ***Laocoön*** dependency has long been a staple in the older historiography, persisting even in modern catalogues. See, for example, ***The Robert Lehman Collection, Vol. 12: European Sculpture and Metalwork*** (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011), 164, no. 131, where the author asserts the medalist "seems to have been influenced by the ***Laocoön*** group. The year of its discovery in Rome (1506), provides a ***terminus post quem*** for the plaquette."

Fig. 6: Bronze plaquette of the *Infant Hercules Strangling the Serpents*, ca. 1500, by Girolamo Mondella (?) (collection of Mario Scaglia).

However, this dependency on the *Laocoön* must be challenged as a superficial comparison to generalized Hellenistic tropes. The true compositional source for the *Infant Hercules* is entirely numismatic, deriving directly from antique coins from Samos.[57] This reliance on ancient coinage perfectly mirrors Galeazzo's own

57 Ibid. The Lehman catalogue acknowledges the link to the Samos coins but maintains an unnecessary secondary reliance on the ***Laocoön***. The present author particularly notes its correspondence with a coin of Thracia, Serdica, minted during the reign of Emperor Caracalla (AD 198–217).

Fig. 7 (facing page): Enlarged image of a bronze plaquette of *Hercules and Antaeus*, ca. 1500, by Girolamo Mondella (?) (collection of Roger Arvid Anderson, Hood Museum, inv. 2016.64.103).

established working methods during this early period; for example, he utilized a fourth-century BC silver didrachm from Herakleia in Magna Graecia as the exact prototype for the grappled beast in his own *Standing Hercules and the Nemean Lion* design (cover).[58]

Severing the false *Laocoön* dependency is supported by incontrovertible historical data. The designs of the Master of the Herculean Labors were copied in marble on the Porta della Rana of the Como Cathedral, a sculptural campaign firmly dated to 1507.[59] It is logistically impossible for a plaquette inspired by a statue discovered in Rome in January 1506 to be modeled, cast in bronze, marketed across Northern Italy, and subsequently translated into monumental marble in Lombardy all within a matter of months. Released from the 1506 chronological trap, the Herculean suite can be safely dated to the first years of the sixteenth century (c. 1500–1505)—the exact window when Girolamo Mondella was actively managing the Veronese workshop and engaged with the regional market for classical antiquities.

These works also hint at Girolamo's elite network. Through his celebrated portraiture, Girolamo established intimate contacts with the Este court in Ferrara. This Ferrarese conduit not only provided patronage for Girolamo but likely served as the vital gateway through which Galeazzo's own plaquettes first reached an Este court audience.[60]

Girolamo's promising career was cut short when he fell gravely ill in 1512 due to the plague. In a testament to the fraternal bond he shared with

Fig. 8: Bronze plaquette of *Lucretia,* ca. 1500, by Girolamo Mondella (?) (collection of Mario Scaglia).

Galeazzo, the dying Girolamo drafted his will and named his brother as a secondary beneficiary. Unfortunately, the documents indicate that Galeazzo was away from Verona (active in Rome) during this tragic period leaving him to receive the news of his brother's death from afar and manage his inherited responsibilities upon his return.[61]

Galeazzo's early activity in Verona was heavily rooted in the glyptic arts, a background brilliantly preserved in his *Diva Faustina*. Rather than a traditional medal, the *Faustina* presents an extremely high-relief bust that was likely truncated from a larger hardstone carving, perhaps originally intended for a seal handle.[62] The success of this master model was immediate; during Galeazzo's own lifetime, the *Faustina* was reproduced in white lead paste on luxury *pastiglia* caskets by the Workshop of the Roman Triumphs, demonstrating the rapid penetration of his inventions into diverse commercial mediums.[63]

58 Douglas Lewis proposed the specific identification of the didrachmon of Herakleia (c. 350 BC) as Moderno's source. See Lewis 1989, 113. See also Warren 2014, 860, no. 317.

59 For the reproduction of these specific plaquette designs on the Porta della Rana at Como Cathedral in 1507, see Bange 1922, 66, no. 480; and Lewis 1989, 107.

60 Lewis 1989, 109, theorizes a connection between Moderno and Ercole I d'Este; Girolamo's documented presence in Ferrarese humanist circles provides the exact biographical mechanism for this conduit.

61 Rognini 1975, 103-104. Girolamo's will was executed during his final illness, demonstrating the reliance on Galeazzo to manage the family's affairs despite his temporary absence from the city.

62 Warren brings our attention to this object. See Warren 2024, no. 327, pp. 870-871, fig. 321.

63 Winter 1984. See for example, British Museum, inv. 1884,1110.1 and the *Palazzo Barberini, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica,* inv. 2108.

Fig. 9: A suite of bronze plaquettes representing figures from the Nine Muses or Seven Liberal Arts, ca. 1500, by Girolamo Mondella (?) (top-to-bottom: National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1957.14.427; Museo di Capodimonte, Naples, inv. 11057; private collection); Berlin Museums, inv. 1085.

The *Faustina* also served as the stylistic catalyst for a broader suite of female portrait busts produced within the Mondella workshop. The best known of these is the circular *Bust of Lucretia* (fig. 8). While the modeling of this relief exhibits a stylistic consonance with Galeazzo's aesthetic, it has long provoked debate with its less qualified reworking of Galeazzo's master matrix of the *Faustina* model, leading modern scholarship—notably Douglas Lewis, followed by Francesco Rossi—to group it under the moniker of the anonymous "Lucretia Master."[64]

While it is possible this derivative work is simply a lesser product of Galeazzo's own hand, the archives offer a tantalizing, elegant alternative. We know from a later 1521 legal dispute that Girolamo Mondella's wife was named Lucrezia.[65] It was a common Renaissance practice to honor a spouse through namesake imagery, particularly with Lucretia serving as the ultimate exemplar of wifely chastity. As a master goldsmith sharing the family's *designia*, Girolamo could easily have repurposed his brother's classical bust matrix to cast a personalized homage to his own wife, thereby unmasking the "Lucretia Master" as Galeazzo's own brother and business partner.

Ascribing these works to the possible hand of Girolamo encourages a sophisticated workshop dynamic wherein Galeazzo's prime inventions were adapted to satisfy specific market demands. This is most evident in a scarcely studied suite of circular female busts associated with this same hand (fig. 9). This series includes a classicizing bust with an exposed breast, a woman holding a musical instrument with pipes, a woman holding a compass

64 Lewis 1989, 141 (where Lewis formally groups the ***Bust of Lucretia*** [Molinier 1886, no. 213] and the ***Bust of a Woman*** [Molinier 1886, no. 518] under the "Lucretia Master" heading). For Francesco Rossi's subsequent catalogue assessments, see Francesco Rossi, ***La Collezione Mario Scaglia – Placchette***, Vols. I-III (Bergamo: Lubrina Editore, 2011), 218-19.

65 Archivio di Stato di Brescia, Fondo Notarile Distretto di Brescia, filza 1981 (August 1, 1521). For published notices of this document, see Boselli 1977, p. 204; and Barbieri 2012, p. 43.

and a preliminary model for the aforenoted that ingeniously grafts the head of Galeazzo's Vienna Madonna (fig. 64) onto the bust of Lucretia.[66]

Collected together, these plaquettes form a programmatic suite representing either the Seven Liberal Arts or the Nine Muses. The presence of Geometry (the compass) and Music (the pipes) points to an iconographic program celebrating humanist intellect and artistic virtue. Scaled for the intimate environment of the *studiolo* or to be mounted on a private casket, this suite of erudite, idealized female exemplars would have been the perfect commission for a learned female patron of the Renaissance courts, offering a brilliant reflection of her own cultured identity.

If Girolamo represented the painterly, progressive wing of the Mondella brothers' early output, the surviving works of the eldest brother, Lancillotto, anchor the *ditta* in the conservative traditions of the Quattrocento. As established by the 1496 division of their mother's dowry, Lancillotto inherited the physical premises of the primary workshop, along with all of the shop effects.[67]

Because Lancillotto was the eldest, his training was rooted in an earlier, stiffer, and distinctly "neo-Gothic" fifteenth-century style, sharply contrasting with the fluid classicism his younger brother, Galeazzo, would soon develop. Isolating Lancillotto's specific hand provides a highly satisfying resolution to several stylistically anomalous, "antiquated" reliefs that have long been awkwardly lumped into the wider Moderno corpus.

The primary works attributable to Lancillotto

Fig. 10: Bronze plaquette of the *Dead Christ Supported by the Virgin and Saint John*, ca. 1480-90s, by Lancillotto Mondella (?) (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1957.14.369).

center on a somewhat rigid devotional plaquette of the *Dead Christ Supported by the Virgin and St. John* (often classified as an *Imago Pietatis* or *Pietà*) (fig. 10). Lewis astutely recognized the distinct stylistic parameters of this relief, linking it to a separate, heavily architectural *Lamentation* plaquette specifically intended for use as a pax (figs. 13-15).[68] Lewis noted a profound "uniformness" between these two reliefs, observing that both were executed by a hand characterized by stiff, stocky figures and a somewhat crowded, archaic emotionalism. Rather than dismissing these as the work of an anonymous, provincial imitator, the archival evidence encourages the possibility of reattributing them directly to Lancillotto. As the senior master of the shared workshop, operating with the family's inherited *designia*, Lancillotto was perfectly positioned to produce these conservative, highly functional devotional matrices for the local

66 For the NGA bust combining the ***Lucretia*** torso with the Vienna Madonna's head, see Molinier 1886, 2:94–95, no. 518; Pope-Hennessy 1965, no. 385, fig. 317; and Lewis 1989, 141, no. V.B.1 (assigned to the Lucretia Master). For the bust with the musical instrument, see E. F. Bange, ***Die italienischen Bronzen der Renaissance und des Barock, Zweiter Teil: Reliefs und Plaketten*** (Berlin, 1922), no. 530. The "Geometry" bust is preserved in the Museo di Capodimonte, Naples.

67 Rognini 1975, 98–99. The division of Iacoba's dowry details the transfer of the ***designia*** to Lancillotto.

68 Lewis 1989, 118–119, Fig. 15. Lewis juxtaposes the ***Dead Christ*** with a separate ***Lamentation*** pax, observing their stylistic uniformity.

Fig. 11: Bronze plaquette of a *Senatorial Triumph*, 1484, attributed to Galeazzo Mondella and a circular frame of *Hunting Scenes* by Lancillotto Mondella (?), ca. 1484 (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1942.9.176).

Fig. 12: Reduced scale image of a silver cope button believed associated with a precious reliquary bust of St. Antigius, bishop of Brescia, attributed to Bernardino Dalle Croci, ca. 1505-10 (Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. M.52-1967).

Veronese market.

Furthermore, identifying Lancillotto's hand offers a highly plausible resolution to the authorship of specific, secondary elements found on some of Galeazzo's more popular secular works. Lewis previously observed that the miniature, frieze-like hunting scenes decorating the sarcophagus in the *Dead Christ* plaquette are stylistically identical to the elaborate, circular appliqué border framing certain casts of Galleazo's medallic *Senatorial Triumph* (fig. 11).[69] Lewis characterized the tiny figures in both of these borders as sharing a synonymous hand, suggesting they were executed by an older assistant within the shop. We can now plausibly identify this assistant as Lancillotto. While Galeazzo was modeling the refined, classicizing central triumph, his eldest brother Lancillotto was executing the somewhat stiffer, traditional appliqué borders used to flesh out the master design into a larger decorative object.

The 1496 reorganization of the family workshop also catalyzed the dispersal of the Mondella matrices beyond Verona. While Lancillotto and Girolamo maintained the primary workshop, the youngest brother, Antonio Donato (a specialized jeweler, or *zoieliere*), opted to strike out on his own. By May 27, 1501, archival records place Donato as established in his own goldsmith shop (*"In apotheca Donati aurificis"*) located in the *Porta Brusata* neighborhood of Brescia.[70]

Donato's relocation to Brescia is of paramount importance to the history of the Mondella workshop plaquettes, as he evidently took several of the family's master matrices with him. The migration of these models via Donato explains

69 Ibid., 119. Lewis specifically notes that the "elaborate circular band of tiny figures engaged in hunting scenes" around the ***Senatorial Triumph*** and the sarcophagus frieze of the ***Dead Christ*** share "stocky, slightly clumsy physical types," assigning them to a secondary hand in the shop.

70 Boselli 1977, I: 205. The May 1501 record is the earliest documentary confirmation of Donato's active goldsmith shop in Brescia's Porta Brusata.

a fascinating geographic anomaly in the physical record. The *Dead Christ* matrix (the very model we have just attributed to Lancillotto) was subsequently utilized to cast a highly ornate cope button (*morsus*) executed by the goldsmith Bernardino Dalle Croci in Brescia not long after Donato's arrival (fig. 12).[71]

This cross-pollination of the Mondella models in Brescia became a multi-generational enterprise. Following Donato's establishment in the city, his son, the master jeweler Giovanni Maria Mondella, rose to immense civic and financial prominence. In a striking continuation of his father's interaction with the works Bernardino Dalle Croci, Giovanni Maria was later officially contracted to modify and restore that same goldsmith's magnum opus: the magnificent *Reliquiario della Santissima Croce* (Reliquary of the Holy Cross) for the Duomo Vecchio of Brescia.[72] The Brescian branch of the family became highly successful, aristocratic-leaning financiers who dealt in antiquities and collected vast annuities (*livelli*), all while monetizing their Veronese heritage.

The formidable, multi-pronged monopoly the four Mondella brothers held over the luxury arts of the Veneto and Lombardy was ultimately dismantled by shifting ambitions and a rapid succession of tragedies in the early sixteenth century.

The gradual dissolution of the primary fraternal syndicate began not with a sudden death, but with a deliberate administrative closure. In May 1508, Galeazzo formally settled the accounts for his tenure overseeing the Veronese goldsmiths' guild (*massaria*).[73] This bureaucratic wrap-up appears to have marked a functional turning point for the *ditta*. Freed from the immediate, daily obligations of the civic guild and local workshop production, Galeazzo likely utilized this juncture to embark on his prolonged sojourn beyond the Veneto. It is during this ensuing period that he is presumed to have traveled to Rome, absorbing the profound influence of newly excavated antiquities—most notably the *Laocoön*, which he famously integrated into his masterpiece silver *Flagellation* relief shortly thereafter (fig. 63).[74]

While Galeazzo cultivated an elite, cosmopolitan network, Girolamo remained anchored in Verona, where the final blow to their partnership arrived four years later. In 1512, an outbreak of the plague struck the city, and a fatally ill Girolamo was forced to dictate his final testament to a notary from the balcony of his house (*"dal balcone della sua casa essendo stato colpito dalla peste"*) to avoid infecting others.[75] In his will, Girolamo named his two daughters, Paola and Caterina, as his primary heirs, while entrusting his brother Galeazzo with the secondary responsibility of managing the family's assets alongside his widow, Lucrezia.[76]

The Brescian outpost suffered a similarly premature loss. Archival records reveal that Antonio Donato died in Brescia by the spring of 1505; he is recorded as already deceased—referred to as *"magister Donat zoieler"*—in a necrology entry

71 The adaptation of the Mondella *Pietà* matrix for a cope button by a Bernardino dalle Croce demonstrates the immediate, highly mobile circulation of the family's models following Donato's relocation.

72 Barbieri 2012, 42-43. Donato's son, Giovanni Maria Mondella, is documented modifying this major civic reliquary, firmly embedding the Mondella legacy into Brescian ecclesiastical history.

73 Rognini 1975, 103. Rognini notes the May 1508 document where Galeazzo *"regola i conti della sua massaria con il fratello Girolamo."* Galeazzo settled these bureaucratic functions with his brother, Girolamo, implying that Girolamo probably served another term as *massaro* from 1508-1509, handling the family business in Verona while Galeazzo had the freedom to travel to Rome.

74 For Moderno's Roman sojourn and his quotation of the *Laocoön* (discovered in January 1506), see Lewis 1989, 130-131; and D. Gasparotto, "Antico e Moderno," in *Bonacolsi l'Antico* (Milan: Electa, 2008), 89-97.

75 Chiappa 2016, 112-113. Chiappa's archival discovery corrected the long-held assumption that Girolamo died in 1508, extending his life to 1512 and revealing the dramatic circumstances of his death by plague.

76 Rognini 1975, 103-104; and Boselli 1977, I: 205. A subsequent legal dispute recorded in Brescia in August 1521 confirms Girolamo's widow, Lucrezia, was actively managing affairs that Galeazzo had to arbitrate.

dated 2 April 1505, for the *Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento* in the Brescia Cathedral.[77] Later civic records list his wife, Lucia, as a widow managing the estates of their young children (Giovanni Maria, Luigi, Giovanni Battista, and their sister Caterina).[78]

With Lancillotto having passed away in 1501, by the mid-1510s, Galeazzo was the last surviving brother of the original *ditta*. Operating as the sole torchbearer of the family's artistic legacy, he fully shed the collaborative, regional constraints of his siblings. Armed with the humanist pseudonym "Moderno," Galeazzo would spend the next two decades elevating the Renaissance plaquette from a local workshop commodity into an internationally coveted medium of elite, intellectual exchange.

77 For the documentary record of Antonio Donato's death in the necrology of the *Scuola del Santissimo Sacramento* in Brescia, see Chiappa 2016, 111, 122.

78 Boselli 1977, I: 205. Archival notices confirm Donato's wife, Lucia, was widowed by 1514, and document the presence of their children.

II.

THE DEVOTIONAL MATRIX

Fig. 13: Gilt bronze pax of an *Entombment*, ca. 1480s-90s, by Lancillotto Mondella (?) (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. 420C).

To fully appreciate the genesis of Galeazzo's early religious serial productions, we must return to the inherited *designia* of the primary Mondella workshop, operated by his eldest brother, Lancillotto. While Lancillotto's proposed hand was decidedly more conservative and antiquated, his manner is characterized by a strongly Mantegnesque figural style. His approach favored squarer heads and highly naturalistic faces, pointing to a profound influence from the expressive terracotta sculptural groups executed by Guido Mazzoni for the Ferrarese court.

Despite these older aesthetic ties, the functional mechanics of Lancillotto's devotional matrices provided the structural and conceptual foundation upon which Galeazzo would build his own highly adaptable, serialized *oeuvre*. Furthermore, Galeazzo seems to have directly reprised some of this raw, Mazzoni-inspired expressiveness in his own Lombard-centric works, most notably observed in the emotional intensity of his *Christ in the Tomb* (fig. 36) and *Small Entombment* (fig. 40).

The quintessential example of Lancillotto's production is the earlier disccussed *Dead Christ Supported by the Virgin and St. John* (or *Imago Pietatis*) (fig. 10). Long recognized as deriving from the Veneto-Paduan milieu, the relief's primary figural composition relies heavily on Giovanni Bellini's large *Pietà* (c. 1472) in the Doge's Palace in Venice, while its candelabra and sarcophagus frieze of a pagan sacrifice look to Donatellesque prototypes.[79] Beyond these established pictorial influences, further nuances regarding the plaquette's composition and facture have been observed by Vito Zani, underscoring its complex historiography. Specifically, Zani suggests that contemporary regional sculptors likely absorbed Bellini's painted invention not by viewing the original Venetian altarpiece directly, but rather—or even solely—

79 Warren, 2014, 839-840, no. 294. For a further attributional history, including its presence in the Louvre, see P. Malgouyres, ***De Filarete à Riccio: Bronzes italiens de la Renaissance (1430-1550)*** (Paris: Louvre éditions, 2020).

through the highly mobile, three-dimensional derivation provided by this specific bronze plaquette (fig. 10).[80] However, the most notable feature of this *Pietà* for the wider Mondella workshop is its early framing. The relief utilizes a narrow, standard border-type frame—a functional, defining characteristic that effectively sets the precedent for the standardized borders Galeazzo would employ across his own small relief plaquettes. Furthermore, the extreme mobility of Lancillotto's matrix is proven by its immediate regional dissemination, having been utilized, as noted earlier, on a cope button executed by the goldsmith Bernardino dalla Croce (fig. 12).

A second, equally important devotional work here associated with Lancillotto is an *Entombment* originally conceived for use as a pax (fig. 13). The master model for this relief was almost certainly cast in a precious material, such as silver, and designed to be set against a contrasting precious ground. The earliest and purest iterations of this relief in the form of a pax feature a rather antiquated, almost square frame with a wide and plain filleted border, surmounted by a triangular pediment housing a three-quarter relief profile of God the Father with outstretched arms. In these early casts, the background behind the mourners remains entirely plain.

Analysis of this *Entombment* reveals that the primary figural group was originally conceived in a silhouetted form (fig. 14). The success of the composition within the workshop led to a highly modular approach to its reproduction. The silhouetted matrix allowed for distinct variations, most notably the addition or removal of the flanking saints, enabling the central scene to be seamlessly inserted into different, often taller,

Fig. 14: Bronze plaquette of an *Entombment*, ca. 1480s-90s, by Lancillotto Mondella (?) (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1957.14.297).

Fig. 15: Bronze plaquette of an *Entombment*, ca. 1490s, by Lancillotto Mondella and Galeazzo Mondella (?) (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1957.14.296).

80 V. Zani, *Gasparo Cairano: Compianto su Cristo morto* (Milano: Carlo Orsi Antichità, 2022), text referencing the "placchetta bron[za]"; see also V. Zani, scheda in *Il corpo e l'anima* (2021), 258-259, cat. 74. Zani posits that the plaquette functioned as the primary vehicle for transmitting the composition of Bellini's 1472 *Pietà* to regional stone sculptors.

rectangular pax frames. One specific variant of this *Entombment* entirely encloses the figures within a rocky, cave-like setting (fig. 15). It is visually evident that this landscape background was added *around* the existing silhouetted figures, suggesting that the original concept was being actively reworked into a new format. The introduction of this landscape indelibly shows the influence of Andrea Mantegna's engraving of the *Entombment with Four Birds*, which highly informed the modeling of "caves" that would become a hallmark of Galeazzo's plaquette *oeuvre*, while the distinctive, striated clouds in the sky seem directly inspired by the paintings of the Veronese master Antonio Badile the Elder or the influence Ercole de' Roberti.[81] This ambitious reworking of the conservative, silhouetted matrix suggests the intervening hand of the young Galeazzo himself, effectively establishing a precedent for the multi-purposing and spatial expansion of relief models observed in his later productions.

Émile Molinier characterized Moderno's early period (his *première manière*, c. 1485–1490) as being defined by a self-conscious, provincial North Italian eclecticism.[82] However, framing this period only as derivative profoundly underestimates Galeazzo's working method. He was not a passive imitator, but an active, highly perceptive editor. He functioned as a visual alchemist, engineering a deliberate trans-medial exchange by translating the two-dimensional inventions of the Veneto's avant-garde into reproducible, three-dimensional matrices.

The early ambition of Galeazzo is often proposed as characterized in a masterful *Large Saint Sebastian* (c. 1485) (fig. 16). Here, the composition deliberately extracts the head, torso, bound legs, and Corinthian column directly from Andrea Mantegna's *Small Saint Sebastian* (now in Vienna),

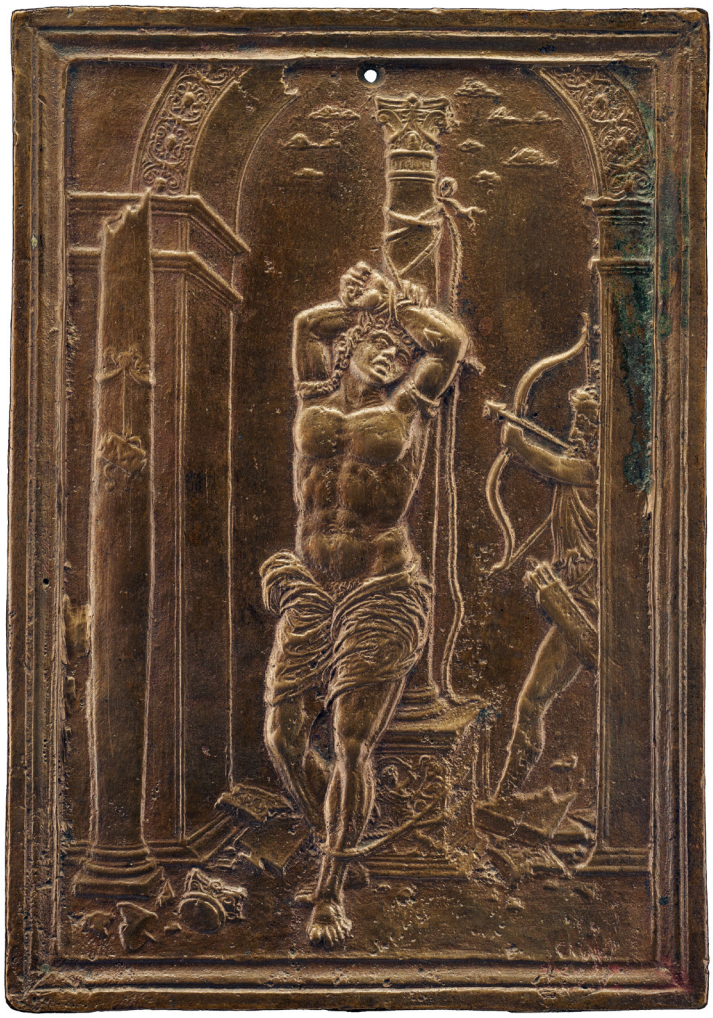

Fig. 16: Bronze plaquette of the *Martyrdom of St. Sebastian,* ca. 1485, probably by Girolamo and Galeazzo Mondella (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1957.14.300).

81 For Mantegna's *Entombment with Four Birds* (Hind 2), see J.A. Levenson et al., *Early Italian Engravings from the National Gallery of Art* (Washington, D.C., 1973), 170–173. The striated clouds reflect the influence of Veronese painters like Antonio Badile the Elder.

82 Molinier 1886, 1:112–116.

a panel painted for a Veronese patron.[83] Yet, the saint's posture is radically altered, lifting his arms above his head and crossing them at the wrists—a distinctly Veronese motif adapted from a 1485 painting by the regional contemporary, Francesco Bonsignori. The eclectic staging borrows the architectural archway and distinctive striated clouds from Ercole de' Roberti in Ferrara.[84] Furthermore, a newly identified visual source may resolve the mystery of the unusual archer taking aim in the background of this composition: the figure appears to be a general quotation from Roberti's *Sign of Libra* fresco in the Hall of the Months at the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara (c. 1468–1470). This was not an isolated incident of borrowing from the Ferrarese master; Galeazzo adapted the grisaille figure of a pensive King David from the background of Roberti's c. 1475 altarpiece for San Lazzaro, transforming it into the idiosyncratic dozing guard used in his own early *Crucifixion* (fig. 20) and *Resurrection* (fig. 24) plaquettes.[85] The *Large Sebastian* is signed with a *cartella* bearing the letter "M" tied to a broken column. This potent composition so captivated Nicoletto da Modena that he completely reworked the second state of his own large engraving of the saint to precisely replicate the plaquette.[86]

While traditional scholarship views the *Large Saint Sebastian* as Galeazzo's earliest work in bronze, the present author suggests it may alternatively represent a collaborative effort from the active Mondella family workshop. The struggling perspective of Sebastian's tilted head and strained musculature recalls the Master of the

Fig. 17: Gilt bronze plaquette of *St. Sebastian*, b. 1487, by Galeazzo Mondella (Louvre, inv. OA 2817).

Herculean Labors (possibly Girolamo), whereas the more refined architectural surrounds suggest Galeazzo's involvement. The vertical abdominal hair on Sebastian—which is striated rather than plastically modeled—follows the exact manner of articulation seen in Girolamo's proposed *Hercules and the Lernean Hydra*. This technique remains stylistically distinct from the sculptural modeling Galeazzo later applied to the same anatomical details in his *David Triumphant Over Goliath* (fig. 33) and other works. Furthermore, the "M" inscribed on the column's suspended *cartella* might not stand for "Moderno"—an epithet probably not yet adopted at the outset of his career—but simply "Mondella." This collaborative origin would help explain the dramatic stylistic advancement of the *Small Saint Sebastian* believed executed before 1487

Fig. 18 (facing page): Enlarged image of a bronze plaquette of *St. Roch*, ca. 1485-90, by the Mondella workshop (collection of Davide Bravetti).

83 Lewis 1989, 106.

84 Ibid., 106-107. The upraised arms derive from Francesco Bonsignori's 1485 ***St. Sebastian***, while the architectural elements and clouds reflect Ercole de' Roberti's ***Saint Jerome***.

85 Ibid. 108. Moderno's borrowing of the dozing guard from Roberti's c. 1475 San Lazzaro altarpiece is well documented in his ***Resurrection*** and ***Crucifixion*** plaquettes.

86 Ibid., 108. Nicoletto da Modena's print (Bartsch XIII, 341, no. 15) precisely replicates the plaquette in its second state.

(to be discussed).

Before examining Galeazzo's subsequent, smaller treatments of similar subjects, it is worth contextualizing the environment in which these specific devotional matrices were produced. During the 1470s and 1480s, the Veneto was repeatedly ravaged by epidemics of the bubonic plague.[87] This constant, terrifying threat drove an intense regional devotion to plague intercessors, primarily Saint Sebastian and the rapidly popularizing Saint Roch, who were frequently paired together in visual culture.[88] Rather than relying solely on the institutional church, citizens increasingly sought the protection of these saints within the domestic sphere. Small, highly portable plaquettes of these protectors functioned as intimate, apotropaic objects for private devotion. Indeed, the choice of bronze for these objects was not just practical; in contemporary manuals of astrology and magic, copper alloys were frequently cited as potent talismanic materials capable of intercepting and redirecting unseen energies, thereby amplifying the protective power of the saints' images cast into them.[89] These works were perfectly suited for domestic altars or small private chapels, serving a similar function to Bartolomeo Montagna's 1487 painting of the *Madonna and Child with Saints Roch and Sebastian*, which was commissioned for a private chapel by a local priest, "prete Gerolamo."[90]

Fig. 19: Fresco of *St. Roch* by Domenico and Francesco Morone, 1502, for the *Chiesa di San Nicola da Tolentino al Paladon* (Museo di Castelvecchio, Verona).

87 S. Boeckl, ***Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology*** (Kirksville, 2000), 62; and Vaslef, 35-36, regarding the plague epidemics in the Veneto between 1470 and 1480.

88 S. Barker, "The Making of a Plague Saint," in ***Piety and the Plague*** (Kirksville, 2007), 90-131. Sebastian and Roch were frequently paired in both public and domestic devotion.

89 For the talismanic properties of bronze and copper alloys in Renaissance magic and natural philosophy, see Jordan Famularo, Gems and the Media of Italian Art, ca. 1450-ca. 1550, PhD Dissertation (2020). Furthermore, Margaret Morse notes that Venetian domestic devotion was frequently interwoven with sympathetic magic, where small, transportable images of saints functioned as literal visual talismans to guard the household against harm; see M. A. Morse, ***The Arts of Domestic Devotion in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Venice*** (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, 2006), 253-255.

90 For Bartolomeo Montagna's 1487 ***Madonna and Child and Saints Roch and Sebastian*** (Accademia Carrara, Bergamo)—including the

It is within this anxious climate that Galeazzo's synthetic methodology is best exemplified by the creation of his apotropaic "Plague Saint" pendants: the *Small Saint Sebastian* (fig. 17) and *Saint Roch* (fig. 18).[91] Galeazzo's *Small Saint Sebastian* is richly embellished with *all'antica* sculptural motifs, deliberately chosen to emphasize the saint's Roman origins.

The dating and impact of this small relief have been a subject of considerable scholarly discussion. Lewis observed that the painter Girolamo da Treviso copied Galeazzo's *Small Saint Sebastian* plaquette—complete with the exact placement of the arrows and the inorganically imported column—into his *Madonna del Fiore* altarpiece.[92] Because the altarpiece is dated 1487, Lewis proposed this as a firm *terminus ante quem* for the plaquette, though some scholars continue to debate this early dating. However, if considering the *Large Saint Sebastian* involved more than one hand within the workshop, it remains entirely possible the *Small Saint Sebastian* is indicative of one of Galeazzo's earliest independent works, realized before 1587.

Beyond these primary figures, the *Small Saint Sebastian* drew inspiration from a wide geographic network of earlier works. Lewis recognized that the standing female figure within the classical edifice at the left is derived from a cult figure (possibly Venus or Minerva) found in Tomasso Calisto's large circular relief of an *Antique Sacrifice* (1482).[93] Furthermore, the small equestrian statue in the lower-left corner closely resembles the ancient Roman *Regisole* monument in Pavia. This specific detail led early scholars like Malaguzzi Valeri to incorrectly propose that Galeazzo was the Milanese goldsmith Caradosso.[94] However, we do not need to encourage an early Milanese sojourn to explain this feature; rather, this Lombard iconographic connection can now be better explained by Moderno's access to circulating drawings and pattern books from the area, setting the stage for his widespread trans-regional influence.

For this plaquette's pendant, the *Saint Roch* of identical scale, Galeazzo and/or his brothers created a model so compelling that it was quickly adopted locally in his native Verona. This small-scale figure served as the direct source for Domenico and Francesco Morone, who quoted the plaquette's design for their 1502 fresco of the saint originally painted for the *Chiesa di San Nicola da Tolentino al Paladon* in San Pietro in Cariano (now preserved in the Museo di Castelvecchio) (fig. 19).

Together, these two early plaquettes reveal a young entrepreneur actively building a modular visual library whose success was such that his original designs were appropriated by leading regional painters to meet the urgent devotional needs of their time.

Scholars have long debated the specific visual inspirations for the crowded, dramatic relief of Galeazzo's *Crucifixion* (fig. 20). The most convincing is Lewis' suggestion of Ercole de' Roberti's widely influential, albeit, destroyed fresco from the Garganelli Chapel in Bologna. Other suggestions like Antonio Vivarini's *Crucifixion* panel in Ravenna, a *Deposition* attributed to the Master with the Banderoles (c. 1450–75), *et al*, have also been forwarded by scholars.[95]

inscription on the *verso* identifying its patron as 'prete Gerolamo' and its scale being perfectly suited for a private chapel or domestic setting—see Morse 2006.

91 Warren 2014, 837, no. 293; and Pope-Hennessy 1965, 45–46, nos. 144, 146.

92 Lewis (1989) dated the plaquette before 1487 based on Girolamo da Treviso's altarpiece, this early dating is still debated by some scholars. In the present author's opinion, one way to reconcile this is to alternatively entertain the notion the *Large Sebastian* is the collective production of all three '*aurifex*' brothers. The figures of the plaquette have more in common with the works assigned to Lancillotto (Sebastian) and Girolamo (archer). The architectural setting would be due to Galeazzo. The "M" would therefore represent the overall "Mondella" *apotheca*.

93 Ibid., 114. Tomasso Calisto's *Antique Sacrifice* is dated 1482.

94 F. Malaguzzi Valeri (1904), as cited by Warren 2014, 837. The *Regisole* connection fueled early misidentifications of Moderno as Caradosso.

95 For the various suggestions, see Warren 2014, 842, no. 298; Pope-

Despite these diverse potential borrowings, the *Crucifixion* features highly original motifs. Most notable is the foreground soldier wielding a Medusa-emblazoned shield, discussed earlier as a probable hidden self-portrait of the young Galeazzo.[96] The composition also introduces a muscular soldier viewed from behind, a figure Galeazzo would self-quote in his later *Resurrection* plaquette (fig. 24), and who was subsequently adopted by Giovanni Bernardi for his *Combat* plaquette (likely deriving from an engraved crystal).[97]

The immense success of Galeazzo's *Crucifixion* is attested by the sheer volume of surviving casts and its vast contemporary legacy. Early gilt casts were equipped with integral flanges intended for setting directly into pax frames (an excellent example of which survives at the Palazzo Madama, inv. 1229), and it was even translated into exotic mother-of-pearl.[98] During his own lifetime, its influence extended to a Piemontese school painting in Bergamo,[99] larger sixteenth-century wood-carvings in Padua, and later, a 1667 bell in Schwaz, Germany.[100] Perhaps the most fascinating contemporary testament to the international reach of Galeazzo's composition occurred in Spain, where the Spanish Renaissance master Pedro Machuca—famously dubbed one of the "Eagles of the Spanish Renaissance"—deliberately borrowed the contorted figure of the right-hand thief for an illumination in the royal *Libro d'Ore di Ferdinando il*

Fig. 20: Gilt bronze plaquette of the *Crucifixion* by Galeazzo Mondella, late 1480s (Evergreen Museum and Library, inv. EH1952.1.50).

Hennessy 1965, 46, no. 147; W. Wixom, ***Renaissance Bronzes from Ohio Collections*** (Cleveland, 1975), nos. 42-43.

96 Cannata 1982, no. 27, 50-51.

97 Warren 2014, 843, no. 298; For Giovanni Bernardi's ***Combat*** see Donati 1989, 224, tav. 98.

98 The mother-of-pearl rendition is housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Warren (2014, 842-843) notes the two primary rim variants.

99 Accademia Carrara, inv. 218.

100 Manfred Leithe-Jasper (ed.), ***Ruhm und Sinnlichkeit.Innsbrucker Bronzeguss 1500–1650, von KaiserMaximilian I. bis Erzherzog Ferdinand Karl*** (Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum), Innsbruck 1996, 76.

Cattolico executed during the 1510s-1520s.[101]

Galeazzo's expanding ambitions eventually required a canvas beyond strictly devotional plaquettes. This transition is perfectly encapsulated by his earliest medallic design, the portrait medal of Agostino Mazzanti (c. 1485) (fig. 25). The obverse features the young Veronese patrician, while the reverse displays a distinctly classical *Roman Triumph*. As Lewis has observed, the medallic style is heavily indebted to Gianfrancesco Ruberti's 1484 medal of Francesco II Gonzaga.[102] Because the sitter was a young man from Verona with close contacts in Mantua—an exact parallel to Galeazzo's own life at that precise moment—the Mazzanti medal serves as the literal and metaphorical bridge conveying the artist from his regional roots toward his impending Mantuan career.

While establishing these secular networks, Galeazzo continued to dominate the local ecclesiastical market. Works like his *Large Saint Jerome*—a relief prioritizing atmospheric depth and penitential emotion drawn from the linear intensity of Mantegna's engravings and the devotional paintings of the Bellini—catered perfectly to the Veneto's elite.[103] At this time, Veronese churches such as Santa Toscana (newly restored and consecrated in 1489) were actively updating their liturgical furnishings.[104] This environment of fervent renewal was especially pronounced at Santa Maria in Organo. Galeazzo was deeply embedded in the social and artistic fabric of this specific parish; tax records indicate that by 1502

Fig. 21: Bronze plaquette of the *Adoration of the Shepherds* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1490 (collection of Luigi Buttazzoni).

he had established his independent residence in the *contrada* of this community, and was later called upon as an expert to evaluate the price of the church's new cloister capitals carved by Francesco da Porlezza.[105] The Olivetan monks and the wealthy patrician families like the Giusti, Brenzoni, and Maffei, funded the church's new aisle chapels during the 1490s providing a highly receptive, immediate local audience for his refined devotional bronzes. Furthermore, the highly literate, devout patrician class throughout the city formed an eager consumer base. A prime exemplar is the Veronese poetess Laura Brenzoni Schioppo, who founded a chapel in San Bartolomeo in Monte and whose

101 For the Bergamo painting see Accademia Carrara (inv. 218); for the Padua wood carving see Museo d'Arte (inv. 1673). Pedro Machuca's use of Moderno's thief in the *Libro d'Ore di Ferdinando il Cattolico* underscores the swift international transmission of the *Crucifixion* matrix.

102 Lewis 1987, 77-78. Lewis places this as Moderno's earliest medallic design, noting the reliance on Ruberti.

103 Lewis 1989, 113-114.

104 For the restoration of Santa Toscana, see E.M. Guzzo, scheda 10.1, in *Mantegna e le Arti a Verona 1450-1500* (2006), 93-95.

105 For Moderno's residence in the *contrada* of Santa Maria in Organo, see Rognini 1975, 101-102; and for his consultation on the cloister capitals by Francesco da Porlezza, see Lewis 1989, 133, n. 108.

portrait was executed by Galeazzo's brother, Girolamo.[106]

It is within this elite corridor between Verona and Mantua that Galeazzo produced the cornerstone of his early career: the 1490 pax of the *Madonna and Child with Saints Anthony Abbot and Jerome* (fig. 1). Surviving examples of this pax bear variant inscriptions—typically HOC OPUS MODERNI, but uniquely HOC OPUS MONDELLA on the earlier discussed Higgins cast—serving collectively as the definitive evidence that established the artist's identity.[107] Variant casts bearing a cardinal's hat and the inscription "MANTVA" attest to the cross-regional success of this pax. Francesco Rossi plausibly links these specific casts to high-level ecclesiastical patronage, such as a Gonzaga Cardinal or perhaps Cardinal Scarampi, noting that their creation closely corresponds with Isabella d'Este's arrival at the Mantuan court in 1490.[108]

The ultimate realization of Galeazzo's transitional phase—where his Veronese *première manière* officially collides with Mantuan classicism—is his celebrated four-part *Life of Christ* (or *Passion*) suite. Comprising the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, the *Presentation in the Temple*, the *Entombment*, and the *Resurrection*. This series was long assumed by scholars to be a single, simultaneous commission. However, a close material and chronological reading reveals that the suite was assembled and completed iteratively throughout the 1490s, built upon independent models that Galeazzo expanded and standardized.

The specific scale and subject matter of these four plaquettes indicate they were possibly designed to complement and flank Galeazzo's earlier, larger *Crucifixion* relief. As Jeremy Warren (2016) has

Fig. 23: Painted processional banner of *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, ca. 1460s-70s, attributed to Luca Signorelli (private collection).

observed, this flanking, multipart format may have been inspired by a mid-fifteenth-century Nottingham altarpiece of the *Passion*. Now housed in the Musei Civici di Arte Antica, this altarpiece is believed to have served as a private domestic altar for the Este family in Ferrara, providing a possible regional prototype for Galeazzo's choice scale for the reliefs.

The genesis of the suite is rooted firmly in Galeazzo's immediate locale. While earlier scholars like Ulrich Middeldorf and recently Marco

106 M. Castoldi, *Rime per Laura Brenzoni Schioppo* (Bologna, 1994), IX-X; Rognini 1975, 102-104.

107 Bode 1903-1904, 269. The Higgins Pax firmly connected the *Mondella* and *Moderno* signatures.

108 Rossi 2011. Rossi suggests the MANTVA pax reflects the patronage of a Gonzaga Cardinal or Cardinal Scarampi.

Fig. 22 (facing page): Enlarged image of a bronze plaquette of *The Presentation of Christ in the Temple*, ca. 1490, by Galeazzo Mondella (Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1975.1.1347).

Cupperi proposed Lombard or Leonardesque influences for the *Adoration of the Shepherds* (fig. 21), Rossi has rightly disputed these comparisons.[109] The true source of the composition's packed, intense dynamism is found locally in Liberale da Verona's *Adoration* at the Cattedrale di Santa Maria Matricolare, harmonized with the late-Gothic sensibilities of Stefano da Verona. The early dating of this initial compositional phase is confirmed by a newly discovered art market aftercast which bears the engraved date of 1494. The quality of this cast and its probable use of bell metal informs that models of this composition were already spreading to provincial workshops by this date.[110]

To build the series into a full narrative, Galeazzo engineered the *Presentation in the Temple* (fig. 22) by radically synthesizing new spatial models. Although the basic composition appropriates features from Antonio Vivarini's mid-quattrocento Venetian panel of the subject, the relief ultimately breaks from theories proposing strict Lombard influences or the Northern print origins advanced by Cannata and De Winter. Instead, a hitherto unacknowledged debt in this composition points directly to the spatial innovations of Piero della Francesca, transmitted through a processional banner by his pupil, the young Luca Signorelli, dating to the 1460s and 1470s (fig. 23). Galeazzo pairs this central Italian architectural logic with courtly subtext, deploying Simeon unconventionally to Christ's pre-eminent right and placing three dogs in the foreground—which Lewis notes embody the courtly concepts of Charity, Love, and Friendship.[111]

As the series progressed, Galeazzo's reliance on Mantuan sources became explicit. Lewis posited the *Entombment* as the third scene (fig. 69), but this composition originally existed as an independent, silhouetted relief—a proposal reinforced by an exquisitely rendered silver silhouetted example set within an elaborate pax at the Parish Church of San Giuliano in Bologna.[112] To create his *Entombment*, Galeazzo relied unusually on a sculptural, rather than pictorial, template: a remarkable partially gilt bronze plaque (c. 1480) executed by Gian Marco Cavalli for the Gonzaga court in Mantua.[113] Cavalli's classicized sepulcher, detailed with a "Triumph over Death," directly inspired Galeazzo's own tomb features, which Lewis identified as micro-reliefs of St. Helena and the proving of the True Cross.[114]

The suite concludes with the *Resurrection* (fig. 24). While Rossi leaned toward a later Paduan date citing Mantegna's *Sea Gods*, Lewis correctly argued for an earlier conception linked to the *Crucifixion* (fig. 20), highlighting the dynamically posed, dozing guard as a possible echo of Ercole de' Roberti's *King David* (c. 1475) from Ferrara.[115] Galeazzo brilliantly unified the broader Passion series by self-quoting the naked soldier viewed from behind from his earlier *Crucifixion* plaquette.

More importantly, the *Entombment* and *Resurrection* offer the first potent glimpses of Galeazzo's

109 Ibid. Rossi disputes the Lombard/Leonardesque influences proposed by Middeldorf and Cupperi (such as Cesare da Sesto or Foppa), favoring Veronese models.

110 M. Riddick, "A Nativity Attributed to Niccolò Avanzi," ***Renbronze.com*** (2023b). The art market cast of the ***Shepherds*** bearing the engraved date 1494 securely anchors Lewis's proposed dating for the early Passion reliefs.

111 Winter 1984; see also Lewis 1989. Lewis suggested the canine figures embody Charity, Love, and Friendship. De Winter noted the unusual placement of Simeon.

112 M. Riddick, "Galeazzo Mondella's original Entombment," ***Renbronze.com*** (2020). The discovery of the silhouetted ***Entombment*** on the Bolognese pax suggests Moderno's original master model predated the subsequent addition of the landscape background, not unlike the ***Lamentation*** proposed as the work of Lancillotto, earlier discussed.

113 The bronze plaque is located at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Inv. KK 6059). While traditionally associated with Mantegna, it is now largely recognized as the work of Gian Marco Cavalli (c. 1480).

114 Lewis 1989, 121, refining Pope-Hennessy's generic identification of the True Cross legend.

115 Lewis 1989, 117-121. The dozing guard echoes Ercole de' Roberti's ***King David*** altarpiece (c. 1475). Lewis notes the crayfish is an esoteric Renaissance emblem for Christ turning back time and death.

burgeoning intellectual syncretism. By utilizing an *all'antica* Roman sarcophagus as the vehicle for Christian typology and adorning the classical shields of the Roman guards with a crayfish—an esoteric Renaissance emblem for Christ turning back time and reversing death—Galeazzo began to seamlessly fuse pagan antiquity with Christian dogma. Through the iterative creation of this suite, Galeazzo Mondella had fully shed his provincial constraints. He had actively internalized the classical vocabulary of the Mantuan court, setting the stage for the intellectual triumphs of his mature career.

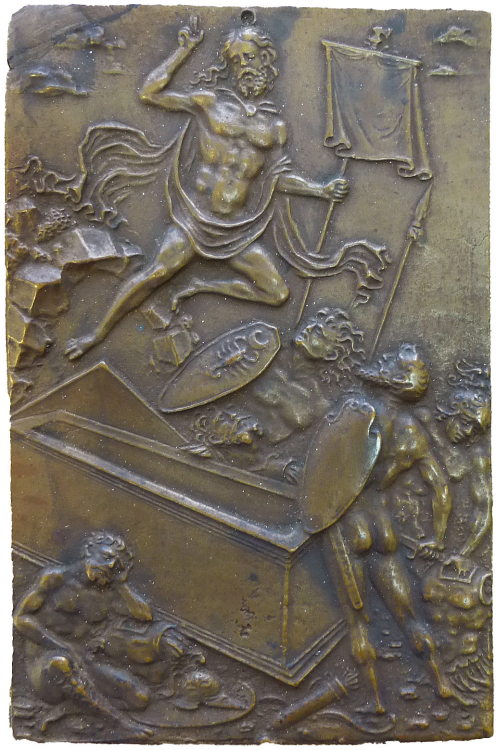

Fig. 24: Bronze plaquette of the *Resurrection* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1490 (Palazzo Madama, Turin, inv. 1190B).

III.

THE HUMANIST LABORATORY

While the monumental, open-air academy of Verona's Roman ruins provided the inescapable architectural vocabulary for local artists, the more intimate, esoteric discourse of the Renaissance *studiolo* was fueled by a different scale of antiquity: the engraved gem and the struck coin. For a young goldsmith like Galeazzo Mondella, whose family enterprise was deeply entrenched in the production of luxury arts, it was the glyptic arts that offered the most direct, tactile connection to the classical past.

As John Cunnally has astutely observed, ancient coins and carved gems functioned as the most ubiquitous and fluid transmitters of classical visual culture, serving as a "portable pantheon" that allowed humanists to reconstruct the mythological and historical world of antiquity.[116] The Veneto during the late Quattrocento cultivated a highly sophisticated, almost feverish appreciation for these micro-antiquities. Patrician collectors, antiquarians, and scholars across Verona, Padua, and Mantua fiercely competed for ancient cameos and intaglios. This environment fostered a new generation of elite, contemporary gem-engravers—such as the Greek émigré Zuan Zorzi Lascaris (known as Pyrgoteles)—who operated intimately within these humanist circles, producing modern hardstone carvings that rivaled ancient prototypes.[117]

The conceptual power of the engraved gem lay fundamentally in the mechanics of the *imprint*—the miraculous ability of a carved, negative matrix to translate its recessed void into a positive, legible relief. This haptic transformation of material, moving from the arduous subtraction of hardstone to the instantaneous multiplication of wax or metal, held profound philosophical resonance for Renaissance thinkers.[118] It was this specific mechanical and conceptual process that Galeazzo would soon adapt, elevating the reproductive capacity of the goldsmith's workbench into the realm of the serial bronze plaquette.

The profound intellectualization of the metallic and sculptural arts during this period is perfectly encapsulated by the Neapolitan humanist Pomponius Gauricus in his seminal treatise, *De sculptura*. Published in Padua in 1504, the text crystallizes the vibrant, cross-disciplinary climate of the Venetan humanist networks that shaped Galeazzo's formative years.[119] Gauricus enthusiastically bridged the traditional divide between elite scholars and manual craftsmen, actively advocating for a new type of artist who was not just an unlettered laborer (*mechanicus*) but a learned intellectual.

Gauricus argued that the sculptor must be well-versed in literature, poetry, and rhetoric in order to properly invent and compose an *istoria* (narrative composition).[120] Drawing a direct parallel between the plastic arts and the literary arts, Gauricus compared the sculptor's modeling of wax to the rhetorician's composition of texts. As Denise Allen has noted in her analysis of this humanist framework, small bronze reliefs were increasingly expected to announce themselves in Gaurican

116 J. Cunnally, "The Portable Pantheon: Ancient Coins as Sources of Mythological Imagery in the Renaissance," in *Images of the Illustrious: The Numismatic Presence in the Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 123-128. Cunnally notes that these small antiquities became increasingly important to students of mythology as authoritative sources for the appearance and attributes of the pagan gods.

117 For the elite network of gem-engravers in the Veneto and the activity of Pyrgoteles, see C. Damianaki Romano, "Zuan Zorzi Lascaris Called Pyrgoteles: A Greek Sculptor in Renaissance Veneto," *Thesaurismata* 28 (1998): 93-127.

118 The ontological significance of the imprint and the seal in Renaissance thought is discussed extensively in recent scholarship. See, for example, J. Keizer, "Portrait and Imprint in Fifteenth-Century Italy," *Art History* 38, no. 1 (2015): 10-37; and M. Leino, *Fashion, Devotion and Contemplation: The Status and Functions of Italian Renaissance Plaquettes* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013).

119 Gauricus 1504. Gauricus's dialogue is an essential source for understanding the interaction between scholars and artists in the Paduan/Veronese milieu.

120 Ibid., 40-50. Gauricus heavily criticized artists who borrowed classical motifs without understanding their literary significance, complaining of those who "steal words here and there from Virgil and Cicero, ignorant of what they are doing."

terms as objects "akin to literary inventions."[121] The sculptor was no longer just a maker of objects; he was a visual poet expected to deploy classical citations with the same erudition as a humanist quoting Virgil or Cicero.

Furthermore, *De sculptura* provides a vital contemporary record of the shifting professional boundaries within the luxury arts. Gauricus specifically chronicles the transition of artisans from the jeweler's bench to the foundry. Famously, he recounts how his close friend, the Paduan master Andrea Briosco (Riccio), transitioned from a goldsmith (*aurifex*) to a sculptor in bronze (*ex aurifice Sculptor*).[122]

Galeazzo followed an identical professional trajectory, but arguably with an even sharper focus on the commercial and intellectual potential of the multiple. Trained as a lapidary and goldsmith alongside his brothers, Galeazzo recognized that the bronze plaquette could serve as the ultimate metallic canvas for humanist *inventio*. By translating the aesthetic of the bespoke, carved gem into the reproducible medium of the bronze plaquette, he effectively democratized the elite experience of the *studiolo*.

Yet, Galeazzo was never a passive conduit for classical forms. Unlike lesser craftsmen who only cast direct impressions of ancient gems to sell as souvenirs, Galeazzo internalized the glyptic vocabulary to compose his own original *istorie*. Armed with the humanist theories permeating his environment, he realized that his technical mastery of the matrix allowed him to participate directly in the philosophical dialogue of his age. It was precisely this climate—where the lines between the antique model, the modern imitation, and poetic invention were constantly blurred—that provided the intellectual justification for Galeazzo to cast aside his family name and stamp his metallic offspring with an intentional, programmatic pseudonym.

The intense, fruitful dialogue between Galeazzo and the Gonzaga court's premier bronze sculptor, Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi, is perfectly encapsulated by the inherent symmetry of their chosen trade names: "Moderno" and "Antico." The adoption of such classical pseudonyms was not a happenstance occurrence, but rather the direct importation of Roman academic practices into the Mantuan court. The primary conduit for this cultural transmission was the courtier and amateur medalist Ermes Flavio de' Bonis. Active in Rome during the 1470s, Ermes Flavio was deeply embedded in the intellectual milieu of Giulio Pomponio Leto's *Accademia Romana*, an underground humanist society renowned for its radical immersion in classical antiquity. This immersion notably included the practice of requiring members to abandon their Christian names in favor of Latinized or Hellenized pseudonyms.[123] Fittingly, Ermes Flavio adopted the name 'Lysippus,' echoing Alexander the Great's official bronze sculptor—a gesture of classical reinvention that would directly inspire the young Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi to become 'Antico.'

Following the dispersal of this Roman circle, Ermes Flavio (Lysippus) relocated to Mantua, becoming a trusted agent and familiar (*carissimo famigliare*) to Bishop Ludovico Gonzaga by 1483. Bishop Ludovico was the primary patron of the young Antico. As Claudia Kryza-Gersch has observed, the arrival of Ermes Flavio (Lysippus)

121 D. Allen, "Riccio's Bronze Narratives: Context and Development," in *Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze*, eds. D. Allen and P. Motture (New York: Philip Wilson Pub., 2008), 20-22.

122 Gauricus 1504, 260-261. Gauricus notes: "My friend Andrea Riccio... goldsmith, he became sculptor in bronze because of his gout" (*Quin . . . Andraeas Crispus familiaris meus... podagrarum beneficio ex aurifice Sculptor*). See also V. Krahn, "Riccio's Formation and Early Career," in Allen and Motture 2008, 3-14.

123 For Ermes Flavio de' Bonis ("Lysippus Junior") and his immersion in the Roman humanist circles surrounding Pomponio Leto's *Accademia Romana*, see U. Rossi, "Il medaglista Lysippus, nipote del medaglista veronese Cristoforo di Geremia," *Archivio Storico dell'Arte* (1893). See also Ulrich Pfisterer, *Lysippus und seine Freunde Liebesgaben und Gedächtnis im Rom der Renaissance oder: Das erste Jahrhundert der Medaille*. Akadamie Verlag (2008), 241-242.

Fig. 25: Portrait medal (obverse) of Agostino Mazzanti, ca. 1485, by Girolamo Mondella (?) (left); a *Roman Triumph* (reverse) by Galeazzo Mondella (right) (Castello Sforzesco, Milan).

Fig. 26: DVBIA FORTVNA bronze medal reverse by Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi (Antico), ca. 1490 (Cleveland Museum of Fine Art, inv. 1971.139).

and the classical restraint of his Roman medals had a profound impact on the young Mantuan artist; it is no coincidence that Pier Jacopo adopted his own classical pseudonym, 'Antico,' at this exact time under the direct influence of Hermes Flavio (Lysippus) and his Roman academic ideals.[124]

Because Ermes Flavio (Lysippus) imported the *Accademia Romana*'s practice of classical masquerade into Mantua, he established the conceptual framework to which Galeazzo directly reacted. As scholars such as Bertrand Jestaz and Douglas Lewis have observed, Galeazzo's very choice of the pseudonym "Moderno" was formulated in response to "Antico."[125]

But what did it truly mean to declare oneself "Moderno"? As thoroughly analyzed by Davide Gasparotto, the term carried profound intellectual weight in the humanist circles of the late Quattrocento.[126] In the literary debates permeating the courts of Mantua and Ferrara, humanists like Lorenzo Valla argued that the "moderns" were not simply chronological contemporaries, but elite men who had so perfectly assimilated the lessons of the ancients that they deserved to be elevated to the exact same status.[127] Philippe Malgouyres, expanding on the assessments of Jestaz, perfectly encapsulates the duality between the two Mantuan masters: while Antico boasted of having equaled the ancients and sought to be seamlessly assimilated into their ranks, Galeazzo—convinced of his own equal success—proudly and defiantly claimed his distinct status as a modern man.[128] He was asserting the dawn of an *Aetas Moderna*—a new age capable of not just mimicking, but of rivaling and progressing beyond the Golden Age of antiquity.

This ideological distinction manifested graphically and stylistically in their respective works. As earlier noted, Gasparotto highlights that Antico's approach was a fundamentally "Apollonian" classicism—controlled, philological, and meticulously focused on the restorative perfection of ancient forms. Moderno's vision, however, was a "Dionysian" classicism. He was captivated by the dynamic tension of the *moti dell'animo* (movements of the soul) championed by Leonardo da Vinci, the dramatic spatial experiments of Bramante, and the atmospheric, narrative intensity of the

124 C. Kryza-Gersch, "Why Antico Matters," in ***Antico: The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes***, ed. E. Luciano (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2011), 15-26.

125 Lewis 1987, 77-97.

126 D. Gasparotto, "Antico e Moderno," in ***Bonacolsi l'Antico: Uno scultore nella Mantova di Andrea Mantegna e di Isabella d'Este*** (Milan: Electa, 2008a), 96.

127 Ibid. Gasparotto details the humanist debate regarding the "ancients" and "moderns," specifically referencing Lorenzo Valla's assertion that contemporaries who mastered classical forms deserved to be called "antiqui."

128 Malgouyres 2020, utilizing the framework established by B. Jestaz. As noted in the related literature, the distinction is clear: "alors que l'un se vantait d'avoir égalé les Anciens... l'autre, convaincu du même succès, revendiquait avec orgueil sa qualité d'homme moderne."

Venetan painters. Galeazzo's modernity lay in his graphic ability to infuse classical bodies with a contemporary, breathless vitality, rendering antiquity not as a static relic, but as a living drama.[129] Furthermore, his very business model—recognizing the serial power of the bronze matrix to disseminate his intellectual inventions to a wider audience—was a distinctly "modern" commercial enterprise.

Before Galeazzo fully codified this identity as a master of narrative plaquettes, he actively immersed himself in Mantua's highly competitive medallic culture. The Gonzaga court was a hotbed for medallic innovation, and Galeazzo utilized this environment as a laboratory for testing and refining his classical vocabulary. Lewis has persuasively demonstrated that Galeazzo's earliest medallic designs were direct responses to his Mantuan contemporaries. Galeazzo's medal of the Veronese patrician *Agostino Mazzanti* (c. 1485) functions as his introductory homage to the court; its reverse of a *Roman Triumph* borrows from Gianfrancesco Ruberti della Grana's celebrated 1484 accession medal for Francesco II Gonzaga (fig. 25).[130] Galeazzo lifted the pivotal image of the foreground horse leaping over abandoned armor from Ruberti, adapting it to fit his own evolving aesthetic. Furthermore, as Lewis points out, the *Mazzanti* obverse features a "curiously ponderous" lettering style that is much heavier than its reverse.[131] While this discrepancy might indicate that Galeazzo was deliberately emulating the contrasting lettering styles found on early medals

Fig. 27: Bronze self-portrait medal of Hermes Flavio di Bonis, also called 'Lysippus the Younger,' ca. 1472-74 (British Museum, inv. 1887,0705.2)

by Antico, the archives offer a more compelling, physical solution: a direct collaboration within the Mondella family enterprise. As earlier noted, during the 1480s, Galeazzo was co-managing the shared *bottega* with his brothers.[132] His older brother Girolamo—the celebrated portrait painter—may have executed the traditional portrait obverse and its heavier lettering, allowing the young Galeazzo to focus his burgeoning antiquarian talents entirely on the classical *Roman Triumph* reverse.

As he matured within this Mantuan laboratory, Galeazzo engaged in an intense study of Antico's early medallic production, an assimilation so successful that Galeazzo's unassigned medals were long mistakenly cataloged by numismatists and art historians under the generic label "Circle of Antico."[133] The physical evidence of this study is

129 Gasparotto 2008a, 96. Gasparotto beautifully contrasts Antico's "Apollonian" classicism with Moderno's "Dionysian" approach, which was intensely interested in the dynamic expressions of the *moti dell'animo* (movements of the soul) and Leonardo's atmospheric action.

130 Lewis 1987, 80. Lewis demonstrates how Moderno's *Mazzanti* medal borrows the truncation, cap, and general *Triumph* reverse from Gianfrancesco Ruberti's 1484 medal of Francesco II Gonzaga.

131 Lewis 1987, 89. Lewis notes the discrepancy between the heavy obverse lettering and the lighter reverse, suggesting collaboration or an imitation of Antico's early medallic lettering styles.

132 For the shared Mondella workshop (*botiéga*) in the *contrada* of San Benedetto during this period, see Rognini 1975, 97, 114–116; and Chiappa 2016, 108–111.

133 D. Gasparotto, "Antico versus Moderno," in *L'Industria Artistica*


O MODERNI

undeniable, though it frequently points to a shared visual pool rather than mere copying. For example, when Galeazzo composed his dazzling silver *Sacra Conversazione* relief (fig. 64), he utilized a nude body for his Saint Sebastian that is remarkably identical to the warrior from Antico's medal of *Gianfrancesco Gonzaga* (which featured a reverse of Fortune, Minerva, and Mars). Rather than a direct quotation of Antico by Galeazzo, however, it is possible both artists were working from a shared visual repertoire. The shared physical type suggests both sculptors had access to circulating preparatory sketches, possibly those seemingly related to the figure of Saint Sebastian from Giovanni Bellini's *San Giobbe Altarpiece* in Venice, commissioned in 1478 and completed in 1487.

This cross-pollination was not strictly a one-way street, and the chronology of these borrowings is often a complex art-historical puzzle. The dynamic, complex figurations that became a hallmark of Galeazzo's *oeuvre* share an intimate lineage with Antico's works. A prime example is Antico's signed medal of *Diva Julia* (featuring a reverse labeled *DVBIA FORTVNA*) (fig. 26). As Malgouyres has argued, the obverse of this medal likely presents a disguised, antiquarian portrait of Ippolita Maria Sforza, underscoring the intellectual masquerades of the Gonzaga court.[134] The prominent nude warrior on its reverse bears a striking conceptual relationship to Galeazzo's muscular types, leaving open the possibility that Antico was looking at Galeazzo's earlier figures—such as the dynamic hero in his *Cacus Stealing the Cattle of Geryon from Hercules* (fig. 28)—when composing his own medallic reverse.[135] Lewis also notes that the exact *Dubia Fortuna* battle scene is reproduced in a miniature illumination of Virgil's *Aeneid* in the British Museum—securely cataloged as a fifteenth-century work—which serves to ensure their early dating.[136]

Regardless of origin, the physical proximity of Galeazzo and Antico's working relationship is most compellingly demonstrated by the commercial afterlife of these elite medallic designs. Once these court medals were completed, their matrices appear to have remained accessible within a shared Mantuan workshop environment, where secondary assistants—perhaps figures like Galeazzo's eldest brother, Lancillotto—were tasked with adapting them for the luxury commercial market. Lewis identified this practice on a uniface plaquette version of Galeazzo's *Senatorial Triumph*, which a secondary shop hand expanded by adding an elaborate, circular border of tiny figures engaged in hunting (fig. 11).[137] The ultimate proof of a shared enterprise is the survival of an iron sword-pommel (formerly in the Molthein collection) that mounts expanded medallic reverses by both masters as companion pieces. One side features Galeazzo's *Senatorial Triumph* with its banded border, while the opposite side features Antico's *Fortune, Minerva and Mars* (originally the reverse of his medal for Gianfrancesco Gonzaga). While

del Bronzo del Rinascimento, ed. M. Ceriana and V. Avery (Verona: Scripta, 2008b), 91. Gasparotto validates Lewis's findings, noting that Moderno studied Antico so closely that his medals were significantly cataloged for a long time as "cerchia dell'Antico."

134 P. Malgouyres, "L'Antico et l'art de la medaille," (2011/2008), positing the identification of the disguised Empress "Diva Julia" as Ippolita Maria Sforza.

135 Lewis 1987, 84-85, 95 n. 50. Lewis suggests Moderno's earlier *Geryon* plaquette may have conversely influenced Antico's medallic designs around 1500–1502.

136 D. Lewis, National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue notes. The appearance of the *Dubia Fortuna* scene in a 15th-century illumination of Virgil's *Aeneid* (British Museum).

137 Lewis 1987, 82. Lewis discusses the addition of the hunting scene border by a secondary hand, and notes the Molthein collection sword-pommel featuring the matched expansions of both Moderno and Antico's reverses.

Fig. 28 (facing page): Enlarged image of a bronze plaquette of *Cacus Stealing the Cattle of Geryon from Hercules*, ca. 1487, by Galeazzo Mondella (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. 166B).

they share the exact same physical application, Antico's side features a differently banded, but similarly configured, expansion designed to match the format of Galeazzo's side.[138] This physical pairing indicates that their extended workshop was still operating together in Mantua, with assistants systematically standardizing the unique models of both masters into matching formats to be sold as commercial companion pieces. It intimately links the elite, gilded masterpieces of Antico to the broader, serial foundry practices of the Mondella studio.

Ultimately, this medallic laboratory proved transformative. The necessity of designing within the confined, circular space of a medal prompted Galeazzo to master the rhythmic complexity and balanced harmony of the tondo format. Beyond compositional borrowings there is compelling physical evidence that Galeazzo's integration into Mantua directly impacted the actual facture of his bronzes. A close material reading reveals that Galeazzo's standardized, thickly molded and filleted frames—specifically those surrounding his palm-sized larger tondi, as well as his rectangular *Crucifixion* and *Large Saint Sebastian*—were almost certainly cast in Mantua. This assertion is supported by the appearance of this exact stylistic framing on other prominent Mantuan bronzes from the same period. For instance, Cavalli utilized a highly comparable wide, molded frame for his previously discussed *Entombment*. Even more telling is the large bronze self-portrait medal of Hermes Flavio (Lysippus) which features a border treatment fundamentally identical to Galeazzo's tondi (fig. 27). This shared physical characteristic suggests that Galeazzo was not only studying Mantuan designs but was actively utilizing local Mantuan foundries to cast these specific, heavily framed matrices.

By engaging directly with the masters of the Mantuan mint—Cavalli, Ruberti, and Antico—Galeazzo absorbed the cutting edge of antiquarian classicism. Soon, however, he began extrapolating these medallic reverses, stripping them of their obverse portraits and issuing them as independent, uniface plaquettes. This instrumental leap equipped him with the visual arsenal required to forge his greatest, most enduring masterpieces in bronze, propelling him into the realm of serial narratives and culminating in his early masterpiece series of the *Herculean Labors*.

"By consciously abandoning the supreme classical authority of Virgil in favor of the Tuscan "modern," Dante, Moderno asserted that the academic acumen of the Aetas Moderna (Modern Age) could intellectually correct and rival antiquity."

Executed around 1487, this suite of four rectangular plaquettes serves as the ultimate sculptural expression of Gaelazzo's profound assimilation of Mantuan antiquarianism. Long recognized as his breakthrough into a monumental, archaeologically exact classicism, this suite illustrates a continuous narrative: *Hercules Seizing the Cattle of Geryon*, *Cacus Stealing the Cattle*, *Hercules Wrestling a Centaur (Cacus)*, and *Hercules Triumphant over the Dead Cacus*.

While these reliefs are most frequently encountered today in bronze, their original conception likely points to the highest echelons of courtly patronage. Given their refined, goldsmith-like execution and their subject matter, it is probable that the Labors were originally conceived and cast in a more precious material—almost certainly silver. They were likely formulated as an

138 Gasparotto 2008b, 282. Gasparotto corroborates the use of the two reverses on the Molthein sword hilt (citing Bernhart 1926 and Lewis 1987).

elite intellectual property aimed at the Este court in Ferrara, serving as a humanist homage to Duke Ercole I d'Este.[139] The highly literate environment of Ferrara was directly accessible to Galeazzo through his brother, Girolamo, who was already deeply embedded within the city's humanist networks.

The presumed popularity and enthusiastic reception of these precious originals by the Duke and his courtiers would naturally have generated a marked demand for the images, prompting their subsequent, widespread reproduction in bronze. It is within this context of commercial replication that Galeazzo chose to inaugurate his new identity through a highly calculated manifesto. A close study of the series reveals that some of the finest, most meticulously chased bronze casts of these reliefs lack a signature. In particular, on the *Hercules Seizing the Cattle of Geryon* and *Cacus Stealing the Cattle of Geryon from Hercules* (fig. 28) plaquettes, the epithet—O. MODERNI (*Opus Moderni*)—is dropped somewhat awkwardly into the blank expanse of the sky, appearing almost as an afterthought where no better option was available. It is entirely possible that the earliest, finest iterations of these two designs were unsigned, and that Galeazzo deliberately added his bold epithet to the matrices only later, retroactively branding his designs to protect his intellectual property, market his visionary epithet, and capitalize on the commercial demand for these specific bronzes.

Galeazzo's decision to prominently sign these works was entirely justified, for they are not simple pastiches of ancient art; they are brilliant,

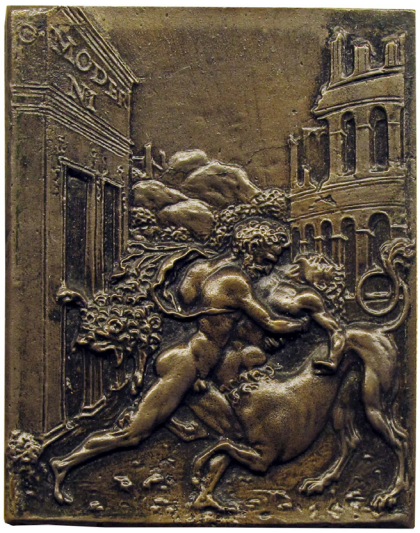

Fig. 29: Bronze plaquette of *Hercules Wrestling a Centaur (Cacus)*, ca. 1487, by Galeazzo Mondella (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. 162B).

highly original humanist inventions. Apart from borrowing compositional inspirations derived from Andrea Pisano's Campanile reliefs (c. 1334–1348)—as noted by Attilio Troncavnini (2020)—the iconography of the series demonstrates a substantial intellectual depth, functioning as a continuous allegory of Fortitude that draws heavily on Virgil's *Aeneid* and late-antique commentaries by Fulgentius.[140] This celebration of local Italian heritage within a classical framework is immediately evident in the architectural settings of the Labors. Galeazzo grounds his mythological narratives not in an imagined Rome, but in the actual antiquities of his native Verona. The ruined amphitheater in the background of the *Wrestling* scene is a direct

139 G. F. Hill ("The Whitcombe Greene Plaquettes," ***Burlington Magazine*** 30, 1917, 109) first suggested a connection between the Hercules series and Duke Ercole I d'Este; Lewis (1989, 110) expands this to include the Mantuan court of Isabella d'Este. The refined quality suggests original execution in silver.

140 For the interpretation of the series as a continuous allegory of Fortitude utilizing Virgil and Fulgentius (who identifies Cacus's dual nature as a centaur), see John R. Spencer, "Two Bronze Plaquettes by Moderno," ***Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin*** 27, no. 1 (Fall 1969): 9–10; and Lewis 1989, 110–111.

study of the Arena of Verona (fig. 2); the broken archway in the *Geryon* scene reflects the Porta Borsari; and the columned arcade in the *Hercules Triumphant over the Dead Cacus* relief adapts the Arco dei Gavi.[141]

But it is the philosophical implication of this specific brand that reveals the artist's true genius. The definitive proof of his humanist agenda lies in his depiction of Hercules and Cacus. In classical antiquity, specifically in Book VIII of Virgil's *Aeneid*, the monster Cacus is described as a fearsome giant. Yet, in the third plaquette of the series, Galeazzo deliberately depicts Cacus as an uncanonical centaur-monster with the body of a lion (fig. 29, back cover). While earlier scholars recognized the figure's "dual nature" (*Ideo et duplex dicitur*),[142] the precise source of this iconographic anomaly reveals Galeazzo's intent: the centaur-Cacus is a direct quotation from Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* (Canto XXV), a vernacular text that re-imagined the classical giant as a centaur.

When Galeazzo deliberately chose to depict the monster Cacus not as the canonical giant described in Virgil, but as the uncanonical centaur envisioned in Dante, he was not making an antiquarian error. Rather, he was deploying a sophisticated "Dante-as-Antique" solution. By consciously abandoning the supreme classical authority of Virgil in favor of the Tuscan "modern," Dante, Moderno asserted that the academic acumen of the *Aetas Moderna* (Modern Age) could intellectually correct and rival antiquity. In a Ferrarese court that fervently championed vernacular literature, Galeazzo used the visual language of the antique to prove a highly "modern" point: the *Aetas Moderna*, armed with its own brilliant Tuscan poets and contemporary artists, had fully assimilated the classical past and could now confidently correct and surpass it.[143] This was the ultimate, bold realization of his pseudonym.

The impact of these signed Labors—and the "modern" identity they carried—was immediate, profound, and geographically expansive. They did not simply remain confined to the desks of humanists; they rapidly infiltrated the monumental visual vocabulary of northern Italy and beyond. By 1507, several compositions from the series—including *Hercules Wrestling a Centaur (Cacus)*, *Hercules Seizing the Oxen of Geryon*, and *Hercules Triumphant over the Dead Cacus*—were copied and carved into the marble reliefs of the Porta della Rana at Como Cathedral by Tommaso and Jacopo Rodari.[144] This contemporary monumentalization was soon followed by fresco reproductions in a small room off the cloisters of the Church of Sant'Abbondio at Cremona, dated 1513.[145]

Their high status as canonical reference works is equally demonstrated by their prominent inclusion in the earliest and most luxurious documented collections of the German Renaissance. In 1521, no fewer than seven of Galeazzo's plaquette designs—including his Herculean subjects—were meticulously reproduced at actual size, in bronze colors with gold highlights, within the illuminated prayer book of the Augsburg patrician Matthäus Schwarz.[146] Furthermore, while the famous Amerbach-Kabinett in Basel (one of the earliest

141 For Moderno's direct adaptation of Veronese antiquities for the architectural backgrounds of the *Labors*, see Lewis 1989, 109–110.

142 For the earlier observation of the figure's dual nature representing human vice, see E. Panofsky, *Herkules am Scheidewege* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1930), 182.

143 This aligns with the broader humanist debates of the era. Gasparotto notes the "moderns" were championed by humanists as those who had so completely internalized the antique models that they had effectively "surpassed" them into a new synthesis. See Gasparotto 2008a, 96.

144 For the 1507 marble reproductions on the Porta della Rana by the Rodari brothers, see Warren 2014, 853, 855-856.

145 For the 1513 fresco reproductions at Sant'Abbondio, Cremona, see Warren 2014, 855; and Marika Leino, and Charles Burnett. "Myth and Astronomy in the Frescoes at Sant'Abbondio in Cremona." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 66 (2003): 273–288.

146 For the 1521 actual-size reproductions of Moderno's plaquettes in Matthäus Schwarz's prayer book, see Georg Habich (1910), 20, Taf. 17.2; and Warren 2014, 855.

preserved premodern collections) is not recorded as holding the Labors, it did include a fine early lead cast of Galeazzo's *Resurrection*, demonstrating the high premium placed on his inventions by early humanist collectors like Erasmus and the Amerbach family.[147] Even in painting, Northern masters like Hans Burgkmair incorporated Galeazzo's *Hercules and the Nemean Lion* into the architectural backgrounds of works like his 1528 *Esther before Ahasuerus*.[148]

These widespread, contemporary reproductions serve as firm *termini ante quem* for the series, proving that within Galleazo's own lifetime, his small bronze inventions had transcended the bounds of Mantua and Verona to become canonical reference works for the sculptors, painters, and architects of the European Renaissance.

147 The lead cast of Moderno's ***Resurrection*** (or ***Ascending Christ***) in Basel (Historisches Museum, Inv. 1904.1063) almost certainly belonged to Erasmus personally before entering the Amerbach-Kabinett. See Douglas Lewis, "Collectors of Renaissance Reliefs: Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) and Baron Boissel de Monville (1763–1832)." In ***Collecting Sculpture in Early Modern Europe***, 128–143. Studies in the History of Art 70. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2008, 135.

148 For Hans Burgkmair's reproduction of Moderno's ***Hercules and the Nemean Lion*** in his 1528 ***Esther before Ahasuerus***, see Warren 2014, 860.

IV.

THE SPECULATIVE MATRIX

Galeazzo's transition into the serial production of bronze plaquettes cannot be viewed exclusively as an artistic evolution; rather, it would have been a calculated economic enterprise. By applying the reproductive logic of the mint and the seal-maker to narrative sculpture, Galeazzo effectively invented a new commercial genre. However, financing this venture required considerable capital. For his bespoke commissions in silver and gold, elite patrons would have provided an advance payment (*caparra*) to cover the steep costs of raw materials. To produce serial bronzes for the open market, however, Galeazzo had to fund the enterprise on speculation, paying specialized foundries to produce multiples before a buyer was ever secured.

Precisely how Galeazzo funded the earliest fine bronze copies of his inventions remains unclear. What is certain, however, is that his models achieved a rapid and widespread dissemination throughout northern Italy during his early Mantuan period. The physical evidence of this early circulation is preserved in the previously discussed cast of his *Adoration of the Shepherds*, which bears the inscribed date 1494.[149] This early cast appears to have been produced in a lesser bell metal. Rather than reflecting Galeazzo's preferred medium—his autograph works were overwhelmingly cast in high-quality copper alloys—this base-metal cast suggests that by 1494, his original models were already circulating widely enough to be independently acquired and recast by provincial foundries in the Veneto or Lombardy.[150]

Transitioning from the limited, early diffusion of his models into a scaled, independent commercial enterprise required a substantial influx of capital.

Fig. 30: Nicoletto da Modena, *St. Sebastian*, engraving on paper, first state, ca. 1512. (Louvre, inv. 3905 LR/ Recto).

By leveraging his inherited share of the family matrices alongside the wealth acquired during the 1496 division of his mother's dowry, Galeazzo gained the exact economic foundation needed to underwrite this expansion. It is plausible that he utilized this financial catalyst to pivot his production toward a mature, speculative market. Armed with the funds to commission dedicated, high-quality batch-casting from specialized *bronzisti*, Galeazzo was empowered to act as his own patron. It was precisely at this juncture that a proliferation of his casts possibly began to emerge on the market, driven by an ambitious new commercial strategy. Utilizing this new capital, Galeazzo began systematically redacting his large, complex, and bespoke medallic tondi into smaller, truncated rectangular formats, transforming his

149 Riddick 2023b, noting the 1494 dated cast of the *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the context of the early 1490s dating proposed by Lewis 1989.

150 Ibid. The use of bell metal for this dated cast points to its facture by a provincial foundry rather than Moderno's immediate supervision, reflecting the widespread regional dissemination of his models prior to 1496.

elite inventions into a lucrative, accessible market of reproducible works-of-art.

While Galeazzo proved his mastery of personalized, courtly portrait medals during his Mantuan period, his true genius—and his most enduring legacy—lay in the commercial brilliance of the reproducible bronze plaquette. Galeazzo recognized that the bronze matrix possessed a unique potential for seriality and mass dissemination. By shifting his focus to uniface reliefs, he capitalized on a burgeoning market of humanist collectors, patricians, and clergy who desired accessible, intellectually charged antiquarian objects.

In a fascinating phenomenon of reverse translation, Galeazzo's three-dimensional bronze compositions became so successful and widely circulated that they were actively mined by contemporary printmakers. The conceptual parallel between Galeazzo's serial bronze matrices and the printmaker's copperplate was so absolute that his plaquettes frequently functioned precisely like prints, serving as highly mobile, reproductive vehicles of visual data that were referenced by the era's leading engravers. This dynamic literally materialized in a surviving suite of three *niello* engravings currently preserved in the British Museum. Originally and mistakenly associated with the style of Amico Aspertini, these three *niello* prints are in fact direct, graphic reproductions of Galeazzo's plaquette designs: *Cacus Stealing the Oxen of Hercules*, *Mars and Victory*, and *David Triumphant over Goliath*.[151] That an anonymous printmaker would translate Galeazzo's three-dimensional reliefs into the two-dimensional, high-contrast medium of *niello* underscores the graphic, linear clarity of his original modeling.

Beyond anonymous *niellists*, some of the most prominent named engravers of the Italian Renaissance actively appropriated Galeazzo's bronze inventions for their printed compositions. The prolific engraver Nicoletto da Modena, whose highly eclectic and well-traveled career mirrored Galeazzo's own, was particularly captivated by the Veronese sculptor's models. Nicoletto's large engraving of *Saint Sebastian* (known in two states) heavily relies on the Mondella workshop's early plaquette of the same subject (fig. 30). In the print's second state—recently dated to c. 1522, when Nicoletto reworked the plate to serve as a pendant to his dated engraving of St. Roch[152]—Nicoletto completely revised his figure to replicate Galeazzo's protagonist, sensitively recasting the angular, Mantegnesque pathos of the bronze original into a softer High Renaissance idiom.[153] The architectural sophistication of Galeazzo's mature works proved equally influential. Nicoletto directly borrowed the intricate, vaulted architectural setting of Galeazzo's magnificent *Flagellation* relief (fig. 63) to serve as the background for another of his *Saint Sebastian* prints (c. 1512).[154]

Furthermore, Galeazzo's *Flagellation* relief served as the primary visual source for the engraver Giovanni Antonio da Brescia. In a dated engraving of 1509 produced in northern Italy, Giovanni Antonio copied Galeazzo's overall composition, the staging of the central column, and the specific, dynamic attitudes of the tormentors and their instruments.[155] Even Galeazzo's glyptic-inspired inventions, such as his *Mars and Victory* (fig. 32), provided the pose and stylistic vocabulary for

151 Warren 2014, 856 (no. 310) and 860 (no. 320); see also Maclagan 1924, 45; citing A. M. Hind, ***Nielli*** (London, 1936), 28-29, nos. 14–16, pl. vii.

152 B. Bartlett-Rawlings, "Re-visioning St. Sebastian: Nicoletto da Modena's Reworked Engravings of St. Sebastian," ***Venezia Arti***, n.s., 28 (2019), 31-40.

153 Lewis 1989, 107. For a recent and extensive analysis of the specific technical and stylistic interventions Nicoletto made to alter the figure of the saint in this second state, see Bartlett-Rawlings 2019.

154 Ibid., 137, n. 244. Lewis notes that Nicoletto's c. 1512 engraving is "a direct borrowing of Moderno's whole architectural system."

155 Ibid., 137, n. 244; citing Hind, ***Early Italian Engraving***, pl. 535. Gagetti 2007 argues to the contrary, suggesting Moderno copied the print. The present author leans toward Lewis' instinct, but Gagetti's proposal should remain in consideration.

Fig. 31: Bronze plaquettes of *Hercules Overcoming Antaeus* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1505: British Museum, inv. OA.2347 (top); National Gallery of Art, DC, invs. 1957.14.324 and 1957.14.323 (bottom).

Nicoletto da Modena's *niello*-manner prints of a *Trophy-Bearing Mars* produced around the turn of the century.[156] In this fluid visual economy, Galeazzo's bronzes had become the very source material that fueled a subtle part of the print industry.

However, the parallel between Galeazzo and the printmaker runs even deeper. A close study of his core *oeuvre* reveals that Galeazzo literally treated his bronze matrices like a printmaker treats a copper plate—issuing his compositions in different "states." By manipulating his wax working models, he could augment a background, strip away scenery, or crop a composition to suit different formats, creating a highly modular and mobile visual vocabulary.

This practice of issuing multiple "states" is most evident in a magnificent series of prime *tondi* (circular plaquettes) and their subsequent rectangular redactions. The key subjects in this group include the *Standing Hercules and the Nemean Lion*, *Hercules Overcoming Antaeus before a Ruined Loggia*, *Mars and Victory*, and *David and Jonathan with the Dead Goliath*.

Galeazzo actively manipulated the background matrices of his plaquettes to suit varying aesthetic and formatting needs. This practice is clearly illustrated in the three distinct background variations of his *Hercules Overcoming Antaeus* (fig. 31). In its state as a tondo, the subject is set beside a tree with Verona's classicized arena in its background. While retaining the subject of the figures against a stark, rocky ground, the composition was successfully adapted into a narrower, more vertical composition. This stripped-down version isolated the combatants to great dramatic effect with the wrestling match set before the provincial classicism of a ruined loggia,

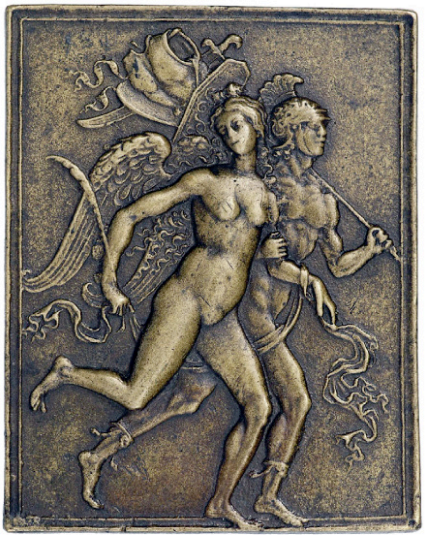

Fig. 32: Bronze plaquette of *Mars and Victory* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1505 (collection of Mario Scaglia).

featuring broken piers and pedestals intricately decorated with foliate ornament and military trophies. Perhaps recognizing a stylistic incongruity between this delicate background ornamentation and the brutal subject matter, the shop produced a third "state" that purged the piers of their surface decoration; instead, the architecture was extended upward into continuous groin vaulting, transforming the ruined loggia into the single bay of an open cloister.

In his seminal 1989 study, Douglas Lewis observed that the large, background-heavy circular plaquettes frequently shared figurative groups with their smaller, rectangular counterparts. Assuming the circular versions were later, derivative embellishments, Lewis initially attributed them to an anonymous follower dubbed the "Master of the Augmented Roundels."[157] Past scholarship occasionally struggled to establish the chronological relationship between Galeazzo's large, elaborate circular reliefs and their smaller,

156 Ibid., 122. Nicoletto's prints of the *Trophy-Bearing Mars* mirror the composition and style of Moderno's plaquette, reflecting either a direct borrowing from Moderno or their mutual reliance on an identical Flavian sestertius.

157 Ibid., 140, Appendix III.B, where the tondi of *Hercules Overcoming Antaeus*, *Standing Hercules*, *Mars and Victory*, and *David and Goliath* were originally assigned to the "Master of the Augmented Roundels."

rectangular counterparts. However, a closer physical and statistical analysis of the surviving casts indicates the exact reverse: the thin, double-ruled rectangular plaquettes derive from the tondi, and not the other way around.

Several compositional anomalies within the rectangular versions betray their nature as truncated redactions. For example, in the rectangular version of the *Standing Hercules and the Nemean Lion*, the composition feels distinctly cramped; there is a conspicuous lack of "breathing room" above Hercules's head, and the tree and bow on the right side of the relief are abruptly and awkwardly cut off. Another anomaly is seen in Galeazzo's *Mars and Victory* design, where the artist makes an extremely rare break of the lower border margin, seemingly forced to squeeze his sprawling composition into the restrictive rectangular format (fig. 32). Furthermore, the expansive, larger scenes on the tondi exhibit specific stylistic signatures and modeling consistent with Galeazzo's autograph hand observed across his other undisputed plaquettes.

The most undeniable evidence of this reduction process is found in one of Galeazzo's late masterpieces, the *Kneeling (or Crouching) Hercules with the Nemean Lion*. This model is known by a minority of examples in its original tondo prototype, but much more frequently in its squared variant. The redaction is made obvious by the "floating foot" of Hercules on the square versions: his foot hovers awkwardly above a plain flat ground, whereas in the circular prototype, the foot and the lion's paw are perfectly grounded, resting naturally against the curving lower rim of the tondo.[158]

Fig. 33: Bronze plaquette with piercings indicating its use an *image de chevet* or for attachment to clothing, depicting *David Triumphant Over Goliath* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1505 (National Gallery of Art, DC., inv. 1942.9.240).

The disparity in survival rates, combined with material quality, further supports this sequence. The round versions are rarer in comparison to the rectangular issues; for instance, there are roughly only seven known casts of the *Standing Hercules and the Nemean Lion* tondi (cover) compared to a staggering 81 or more rectangular examples as last counted by the present author. The surviving early casts of these tondi retain a much higher quality of finish than their rectangular counterparts, and several—such as the *Mars and Victory* tondo (La Spezia, Museo Amedeo Lia)—were lavishly gilded.[159]

This material evidence implies a deliberate two-tiered business model: the tondi were originally conceived as personalized, luxury commissions intended for wealthy, elite patrons. Once the

158 Emmanuel Lamouche in ***Bronzes, plaquettes et médailles in Splendeurs médiévales. La collection Duclaux révélée (catalogue d'exposition, Angers, Musée des Beaux-arts, 9 novembre 2018 – 24 février 2019)***, discussing the ***Kneeling Hercules*** roundel, notes that in the rectangular versions "le pied d'Hercule et la patte du lion ne touchent pas le sol" (the foot of Hercules and the paw of the lion do not touch the ground). Lamouche credits this observation to Bertrand Jestaz and Douglas Lewis as proof that the model was originally conceived for the circular format. See also D. Lewis and A. Struble, "A new redemptive symbolism in Moderno's plaquettes," ***The Medal*** 72 (2018): 43, discussing the "floating feet" on the rectangular reductions.

159 F. Rossi, ***Placchette e rilievi di bronzo nell'età del Mantegna***. Mantua: Skira, 2006, 51, no. 26; noting the existence of the part-gilt roundel of ***Mars and Victory***.

initial elite commission was fulfilled, Galeazzo systematically reduced and redacted these complex tondi into the standardized rectangular formats, creating a lucrative serial product that was far more accessible to the burgeoning middle-class market. Unfortunately, a quantity of the tondi also appear to be the product of at least one or more later workshops who recast them, a practice that historically blurred their superior original quality and confused scholars regarding their chronological primacy.

Rather than a follower augmenting a rectangular plaquette to fit a circle, it is thus more probable that Galeazzo first conceived these sweeping, environmentally rich scenes as large tondi. To satisfy the commercial demand for more easily mountable, less costly serial formats, Galeazzo subsequently truncated these larger circular models into reduced-size rectangular alternatives.[160]

The iconographic choices within these prime tondi reflect the highly erudite environment of the Mantuan and Veronese courts. As established in his earlier signed series, these new subjects continued to function as allegories of Fortitude, presenting heroic labors as paradigms of virtuous action and the purging of evils.[161]

The lines between Galeazzo and the Gonzaga court sculptor, Antico, are once again provocatively blurred in the Herculean tondi belonging to this series. Antico produced a series of large bronze roundels of Hercules around 1496. While the conceptual similarities are evident, the physical realities of the objects highlight the different spheres in which the two artists operated. Antico's tondi were much larger, highly finished, parcel-gilt plaques intended as singular, adapted masterpieces for the highest echelons of the Gonzaga court.[162]

Galeazzo, conversely, took this elite aesthetic and translated it into a palm-sized, reproducible format, allowing a much broader audience to handle and study these humanist inventions. It remains an open question whether Antico took his cue from Galeazzo's energetic narrative style, or if Galeazzo was actively democratizing Antico's monumental court commissions.

Galeazzo's profound ability to synthesize antique sources is brilliantly displayed in the pendants of *Mars and Victory* and *David and Jonathan with the Dead Goliath*. For the *Mars and Victory*, Galeazzo layered the figure of Victory over an ancient coin-type of a striding Mars (derived from a Flavian sestertius), creating a heavy, glyptic effect within the bronze (fig. 32).[163] In the *David*, he seamlessly amalgamated a figure of David adapted from a Jacopo Bellini sketchbook, the dead body of Goliath from a Mantegnesque prototype, and a kneeling figure of Jonathan drawn directly from an antique sarcophagus relief depicting a sacrificial beheading (fig. 33).[164]

To fully grasp the appeal of Galeazzo's small bronzes for elite patrons, we must discard the modern dichotomy between 'rational' humanist intellectualism and 'superstitious' Renaissance magic. In the early sixteenth-century worldview, these spheres were seamlessly intertwined. Humanist philosophy, deeply informed by Neoplatonism and the treatises of Marsilio Ficino, actively embraced astral magic and the talismanic properties of the natural world.[165] Therefore,

160 Ibid. The rectangular *Hercules Overcoming Antaeus* demonstrates Moderno's active truncation and revision of the architectural setting to suit the new, serial format.

161 Spencer 1969, 2-11; and Lewis and Struble 2018, 51.

162 For Antico's large, parcel-gilt bronze roundels of Hercules (c. 1496), see Eleonora Luciano, Antico: Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi (c. 1455-1528), in *Antico: The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes*, ed. E. Luciano (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2011), 1-14. While Antico produced highly finished, one-off items, Moderno adapted this aesthetic for a broader, haptic, serial market.

163 For the *Mars and Victory* reliance on a Flavian sestertius, see Lewis 1989, 122; and Warren 2014, 863.

164 Lewis 1989, 123. The figure of David is drawn from a Jacopo Bellini sketchbook, while the kneeling companion derives from an antique sarcophagus relief of a bull sacrifice (an example of which was in Mantua).

165 For Marsilio Ficino's influential theories on astral magic,

when Isabella d'Este's 1542 posthumous inventory recorded her prized possession of 'medals… ancient and modern, both round and rectangular'—the latter descriptor assuredly indicating bronze plaquettes—she was not merely cataloguing antiquarian status symbols.[166] For the Renaissance collector, objects rendered in metal and precious stone were prized not only for communicating cultural refinement but also for radiating spiritual authority and possessing active, supernatural powers. The very material of copper-alloy was cited in contemporary manuals of astrology and magic as a resilient substance capable of intercepting and redirecting unseen energies.[167] Consequently, these portable bronze reliefs functioned simultaneously as markers of classical erudition and as potent apotropaic devices. Some pierced plaquettes would have been worn directly on the body to protect the physical and spiritual well-being of the wearer, while others functioned as *images de chevet*, sewn discreetly into the insides of bed curtains to safeguard the vulnerable hours of sleep and childbirth (fig. 33).[168] Thus, for the

Fig. 34: Gilt bronze plaquette of *The Death of Orpheus* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1505 (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, inv. 665B).

humanist collector who studied Virgil and Dante by day, a classicizing bronze plaquette served a dual duty, operating both as a tangible link to antiquity and a protective talisman by night.

Galeazzo consciously amplified this inherent material magic by embedding specific protective and redemptive iconography directly into his matrices, most notably through his innovative use of the coral motif. These objects were designed for the haptic experience—intended to be held in the hand, turned in the light, and passed between scholars in the *studiolo* as tactile, philosophical puzzles. However, beyond their moral and antiquarian value, these objects also possessed a deeply talismanic function for their patrons.

It is within these prime tondi and their rectangular variants that Galeazzo begins to prominently incorporate a highly specific environmental detail: a leafless, branching tree. As Lewis and Amy Struble have convincingly identified, what previous scholars dismissed as barren, dead trees are, in fact, meticulous representations of *Corallium rubrum* (branches of Mediterranean red coral).[169]

melothesia, and the use of natural materials to capture celestial influences, see his ***De vita coelitus comparanda*** (Book III of ***De triplici vita***, 1489). See also Denis J. J. Robichaud, "Ficino on Force, Magic, and Prayers: Neoplatonic and Hermetic Influences in Ficino's ***Three Books on Life***," ***Renaissance Quarterly*** 70 (2017): 44–87.

166 For Isabella d'Este's posthumous inventory and its reference to "round and rectangular" medals as an indication of plaquettes, see Marika Leino, ***Fashion, Devotion and Contemplation: The Status and Functions of Italian Renaissance Plaquettes*** (Bern: Peter Lang, 2013), 6. For the inventory itself, which records the objects moved to the Corte Vecchia, see Alessandro Luzio, "Isabella d'Este e il sacco di Roma," ***Archivio storico lombardo*** 35 (1908): 413–425; and Clifford M. Brown, ***La Grotta di Isabella d'Este*** (Mantua, 1985), 55–67.

167 Bronze (copper-alloy) was frequently cited as a talismanic material in manuals of astrology and magic because of its perceived power to intercept and redirect energies. This tradition was codified for the Latin West in texts such as Th□bit ibn Qurra's ***De imaginibus***, which detailed the sculpting of copper-based metals in accordance with astrology to make talismans.

168 Small bronze plaquettes were frequently pierced for suspension on the body or on domestic furnishings. For the specific use of plaquettes as ***images de chevet*** sewn into bed curtains for protection, see R. H. Randall, Jr., "An Image de Chevet," ***Bulletin of the Walters Art Gallery*** 20 (1968); and Alison Lee Palmer, "The Walters' Madonna and Child Plaquette and Private Devotional Art in Early Renaissance Italy," ***The Journal of the Walters Art Museum*** 59 (2001): 73–84.

169 Lewis and Struble 2018, 43-45. The authors identify the specific branching patterns and blunt-ended terminations in Moderno's plaquettes (including the ***Standing Hercules*** and ***Kneeling Hercules***) as ***Corallium rubrum***, overturning the traditional identification of these forms as barren trees, noting its symbolic association with blood,

From antiquity, red coral was intimately connected with blood and endowed with powerful apotropaic (protective) and supernatural properties. According to Ovid, coral was formed when the blood of the slain Medusa touched seaweed, petrifying it into stone.[170] During the Renaissance, this ancient belief in coral's protective power against earthly misfortune was actively synthesized with Christian theology. The blood-red branches of the coral became a potent redemptive symbol, directly equating the classical self-sacrifices of heroes like Hercules with the passion and shedding of Christ's blood on the Cross.[171]

By casting these coral branches alongside his Herculean heroes and victorious warriors, Galeazzo elevated his plaquettes beyond decorative arts and into the realm of the haptic talisman. They became active, apotropaic amulets—charms cast in bronze that visually and materially guarded the domestic sphere while promising divine redemption.

The profound symbolic weight of the coral branch is brilliantly articulated in Galeazzo's *Death of Orpheus* (alternatively titled *Orpheus Attacked by the Thracian Women*) (fig. 34), a masterpiece executed in the Mantuan orbit around 1500–1502, just prior to his Lombard excursion (to be discussed). The relief depicts the mythological poet bound to a leafless, barren tree while being beaten to death by Maenads. This distinctive "tree" in the form of red coral centered behind the bound torso of the hero with its branches spread above him like a secular baldacchino, serves as a powerful symbol of his shed blood and offers the promise of regenerative salvation achieved through his tragic death.[172]

Compositionally, Galeazzo did not invent this arrangement but ingeniously adapted it—in almost exact reverse—from Niccolò Fiorentino's circa 1490 medal reverse depicting *Virginity Tying Love to a Tree*.[173] However, Galeazzo brilliantly filtered this Florentine prototype through his own newly acquired Mantegnesque vocabulary, replacing the softer Florentine modeling with a dynamic, muscular classicism. The success of this composition proves that such allegories of bound figures, infused with the protective and regenerative symbolism of coral, were highly prized within the Mantuan thematic pool. As an object that merges intense classical tragedy with apotropaic power, it anticipates the talismanic collecting habits of the court's most prominent female patrons.

The esoteric and talismanic functions of these objects were highly appealing to the elite female patrons of the Mantuan and Urbino courts, who frequently navigated the perilous realities of dynasty, disease, and fertility through the use of sympathetic magic. The most elite consumers of these small, haptic treasures—spearheaded by Isabella d'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, and her sister-in-law Elisabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino—shared a profound belief in the active, celestial power of materials.

sacrifice, and the promise of divine or regenerative salvation.

170 Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV:740–752; see also Lewis and Struble 2018, 51, for the transmission of this myth into Renaissance amuletic practices.

171 Lewis and Struble 2018, 51. The incorporation of red coral connected the classical purging of evils by Hercules with the redemptive blood of Christ, providing the plaquette with both humanist meaning and active apotropaic power.

172 Lewis and Struble 2018, 42–55.

173 For the dating of the *Death of Orpheus* to c. 1500–1502 and its direct compositional reliance on Niccolò Fiorentino's *Virginity Tying Love to a Tree* (c. 1490), see D. Lewis, "The Medallic Oeuvre of 'Moderno': His Development at Mantua in the Circle of 'Antico'," *Studies in the History of Art* 21 (1987), 77–97.

Fig. 35 (facing page): Portrait of Elisabetta Gonzaga, Duchess of Urbino by Raffaello Sanzio, ca. 1502 (Uffizi, inv. 1890, no. 1441)

Isabella's famed collecting practices intimately linked precious materials with magic and medicine. Her *grotta* was filled with gems, cameos, and carved stones that were revered not just for their antiquarian pedigree, but for their inherent supernatural and medicinal powers.[174] Isabella actively utilized such objects in her daily life; during her pregnancies, she firmly believed in the efficacy of childbirth amulets, continuously wearing a *Pietra da l'Aquila* (an "eagle stone" or limonite concretion) to adduce pregnancy, prevent abortion, and facilitate a safe delivery.[175]

Her sister-in-law, Elisabetta Gonzaga, similarly relied on astrological and talismanic remedies, particularly concerning the crisis of her own fertility. Following her marriage to Duke Guidobaldo da Montefeltro—whose tragic impotence was notoriously revealed shortly after their wedding—Elisabetta was enveloped in a court culture steeped in astrology.[176] Guidobaldo's uncle and tutor, Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini, was a devoted astrologer who had even delayed the consummation of their marriage because he claimed the stars were not in a favorable conjunction. Furthermore, Elisabetta was known to have discussed astrological superstitions with her relative Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan.

Elisabetta's reliance on esoteric amulets is most prominently documented in her formal portrait, in which she wears a striking jewel on her forehead in the shape of a scorpion (fig. 35).[177] While the scorpion was an ambivalent symbol, in Renaissance astrological and medical doctrine (later echoed by Paracelsus), a scorpion talisman was specifically advised to be worn by those suffering from derangements of the reproductive system. Elisabetta's scorpion pendant likely functioned as an astral fertility amulet, adopted to invoke celestial forces in her desperate—and ultimately impossible task—of providing an heir to the Duchy of Urbino.

Viewed through the lens of Isabella's eagle stones and rectangular plaquettes, alongside Elisabetta's scorpion amulet, Galeazzo's incorporation of the apotropaic coral tree and his production of serial bronzes with protective associations were calculated to appeal to this specific patrician mindset. For collectors within the Gonzaga-Este network, a bronze plaquette or tondo was never just a decorative imitation of antiquity; it was a potent, active instrument designed to harness celestial energies, project personal virtue, and safeguard the domestic sphere.

174 For Isabella d'Este's collecting of precious stones for their magical and medicinal properties, see M. Belozerskaya, ***Luxury Arts of the Renaissance*** (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), 58–59.

175 For her specific use of the ***Pietra da l'Aquila*** during pregnancy, see S. Cohen, "Elisabetta Gonzaga and the Ambivalence of Scorpio in Medieval and Renaissance Art," ***Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*** 13, no. 3.

176 Cohen 2018, 429–433. Cardinal Ottaviano degli Ubaldini's astrological interventions in the marriage, as well as Elisabetta's exposure to the superstitions of Lodovico Sforza, highlight the esoteric environment of her court.

177 Cohen 2018, 408–412, 436. Elisabetta's scorpion pendant functioned as a specific astral talisman for reproductive health.

V.

MASTERWORKS IN MINIATURE

Between his youthful registration in the Verona goldsmiths' guild in March 1485 at the age of eighteen, and his subsequent elevation to serve a two-year incumbency as its *massaro* (president) in 1496–1497, Galeazzo's documentary footprint is sparse, but not entirely absent as past scholars have suggested. Rather than disappearing into a pronounced hiatus, archival records confirm he was actively attending local guild meetings in April 1490 and June 1491. This continued local presence is highly significant, for it securely anchors the young artist in Verona during the exact period he created his first dated masterpiece—the *Virgin and Child with Saints* pax of 1490 (fig. 1)—proving his nascent bronze enterprise was developing concurrently with his obligations to the Veronese guild.[178]

Having already secured his financial independence following the division of his mother's estate in 1496, Galeazzo's career underwent a dramatic geographic expansion at the dawn of the Cinquecento. The definitive physical dispersal of the Mondella brothers' operations is evidenced by May 1501, when Antonio Donato relocated to nearby Brescia to open a new goldsmith's shop (*apotheca*) in the *contrada* of Porta Brusata.[179] By this time, the Veronese tax registries record Galeazzo living entirely independently in the *contrada* of Santa Maria in Organo.[180] Freed from the daily municipal obligations of the former shared family *bottega*, Galeazzo was fully emancipated to pursue a highly mobile, peripatetic career across northern Italy.

His physical movements during this period can be mapped through the geographical diffusion of his works and the strategic outposts established by his family. It is probable that Galeazzo spent time in Brescia around 1501 and 1502, utilizing his brother Antonio Donato's new shop as a conduit for his models in the city while laying the groundwork for a further journey westward into Milanese Lombardy, the ancestral home of his family. The trip may also have been motivated following the loss of Lancillotto who had died in 1501.

Fig. 36: Bronze plaquette of *Christ in the Tomb, Supported by the Virgin, Saint John and an Angel*, ca. 1501-02 (collection of Mario Scaglia).

It was likely during this Brescian interlude that Galeazzo formulated one of his most iconic, historically debated, and prolifically reproduced compositions: the *Pietà* (or *Christ in the Tomb, supported by the Virgin, Saint John, and an Angel*) (fig 36). Past scholarship often judged this work to be a late creation, largely due to a surviving silver pax of the design in the Mantua Cathedral dated 1513 (fig. 66). However, recent observations encourage its invention to his proposed time in Brescia at the dawn of the century. As noted by Paola Venturelli the woodcarver Stefano Lamberti was influenced by Galeazzo's *Pietà* motif for the carved clipeate roundel that crowns the monumental altarpiece

178 For the correction of this documentary gap and the records of Galeazzo's presence at the guild meetings of 1485, 1490, and 1491, see the chronology published in Chiappa 2016, 122 (Doc. 2).

179 Ibid., 110. Archival documents place Antonio Donato Mondella in the *contrada* Porta Brusata in Brescia by May 1501.

180 Ibid., 111. Chiappa notes Galeazzo's absence from the 1502 *estimo* alongside his brothers, indicating a separation of their households and business affairs prior to his later documented returns to Verona in 1505 and 1506-1507.

frame in the church of San Francesco d'Assisi in Brescia.[181] Because Lamberti's frame is securely dated to 1502, it establishes a potential *terminus ante quem* for Galeazzo's composition, suggesting it was already completed and actively circulating in Brescia by that year.[182]

The immediate and profound success of Galeazzo's *Pietà* in Brescia was not just a matter of aesthetic appeal but rather was the perfect visual answer to a highly specific, localized religious fervor. At the dawn of the Cinquecento, Brescia and its diocese experienced a significant proliferation of artworks dedicated to the *Compianto* (Lamentation) and the *Imago Pietatis* (Man of Sorrows). This phenomenon was driven by the 1494 founding of the *Schola Corporis Christi* (Confraternity of the Holy Sacrament) in the Brescia Cathedral.[183] The confraternity's intense promotion of Eucharistic piety and devout meditation on the suffering body of Christ created an enormous demand for affecting, Christocentric imagery among the city's patrons and artists, including Vincenzo Foppa, Girolamo Romanino, and Gasparo Cairano.[184]

It was into this highly charged, empathetic atmosphere that Galeazzo introduced his *Pietà*. To craft this masterpiece, he synthesized the most powerful emotional and sculptural currents of northern Italy. The composition's half-length, close-up format—pushing the dead Christ directly against the picture plane and into the viewer's physical space—relies heavily on the celebrated *Pietà* paintings of Giovanni Bellini, specifically those in the Brera and the Ducal Palace in Venice.[185] Concurrently, the heavy, athletic rendering of Christ's torso and the intense, open-mouthed grief of the Virgin and Saint John recall the profound sculptural pathos introduced decades earlier by Donatello's bronze *Entombment* for the Santo in Padua.[186] Furthermore, as Émile Molinier observed, Galeazzo appears to have distilled these influences by reconfiguring the crowded, dynamic narrative of the earlier *Lamentation* relief (associated with Lancillotto, figs. 13-15) into this tight, static, and highly iconic three-figure group.[187]

Perhaps the most brilliant and poignant detail of Galeazzo's invention is the inclusion of a diminutive, putto-like lamenting angel tucked beneath Christ's right arm. While later, derivative

181 Paola Venturelli (2012): ***La 'Pace del Moderno' del Museo Diocesano Francesco Gonzaga di Mantova***. OADI – Osservatorio per le Arti Decorative in Italia. Zani challenges this proposal suggesting a stronger influence from Bellini in Zani 2022. However, Lamberti's production could be the result of both influences.

182 For the identification of Lamberti's 1502 roundel as a direct derivation of Moderno's plaquette, see Venturelli 2012. It should be noted that this specific connection—and the resulting early chronological anchor it provides for the plaquette—has been actively contested in the literature. Scholars such as Giovanni Agosti (1991), Davide Gasparotto (2008a, pp. 89–97), and Vito Zani have cautioned against linking the two works, arguing that the visual comparison is erroneous and artificially inflates the dating of Moderno's invention. Nevertheless, given the profound formal analogies between the plaquette and Lamberti's carving, coupled with the new archival evidence situating the Mondella workshop's strategic expansion into Brescia (via Antonio Donato) precisely in May 1501, the present study maintains Venturelli's connection, preferring the notion that Lamberti's composition was inspired by Bellini's composition but also possibly Moderno's design. The Mondella studio in Brescia was approximately a 5-to-7-minute walk to Lamberti's studio (being the distance between the ***contrada*** of Porta Brusata to the ***contrada***/ church of San Francesco, respectively).

183 M. Tanzi, "Tra scultura e pittura: il paradosso di Brescia," in ***Teatri del sacro e del dolore*** (Soncino, 2020), 91-97; and Zani 2022.

184 Zani 2022, discussing the ***Schola Corporis Christi*** and the subsequent surge of ***Compianto*** altarpieces in Brescian churches during the first decade of the sixteenth century.

185 Lucco, Humfrey, Villa, ***Giovanni Bellini*** (2019), 365-367, 370-374. See also Lewis 1989, who connects Moderno's scheme to the Bellini prototypes.

186 T. Richter, ***Paxtafeln und Pacificalia*** (2003), noting the translation of Donatello's expressive emotionality into Moderno's ***Pietà***.

187 Molinier 1886, 132, no. 175; see also Riddick 2020, noting the reconfiguration of his late 1480s ***Lamentation***.

Fig. 37 (facing page): Detail of an oil-on-wood panel painting of the Pietà (after Jan Sanders van Hemessen, after Moderno) by the Master of the Prodigal Son, ca. 1550 (National Gallery, London, UK, inv. NG266)

casts often omit this figure in favor of added haloes or background crosses, the finest and earliest states of the plaquette invariably feature this weeping child.[188] The motif functions as a direct homage to the *Angel Pietà* tradition championed by Andrea Mantegna and Giovanni Bellini (most notably Bellini's *Dead Christ Supported by Angels* in the Museo Correr).[189] By seamlessly merging the angelic supporter with the traditional mourners of Mary and John, Galeazzo amplified the domestic, tender grief of the scene, creating a potent image that resonated deeply with lay worshippers.

The broader impact of Galeazzo's matrices upon the Brescian environment is perhaps best exemplified by the city's premier stone sculptor, Gasparo Cairano. While Cairano's own monumental stone *Compianti* appear to draw more directly from the earlier, rougher models of the Mondella workshop (such as that here proposed by Galeazzo's brother, Lancillotto [see fig. 10]), Gasparo's mature *all'antica* vocabulary was profoundly shaped by Galeazzo's bronze inventions. As Vito Zani has demonstrated, this impact is most evident in the sculptural program of the Martinengo Mausoleum, commissioned in 1503. Working alongside the goldsmith Bernardino dalle Croci (discussed earlier), Cairano carved complex marble roundels for the monument featuring a *Battle Scene* and a pagan *Sacrifice*. These rare, antiquarian subjects—virtually absent in local monumental stone carving prior to this moment—betray a direct reliance on the sophisticated, classicizing bronze plaquettes that Galeazzo had successfully injected into the Brescian artistic bloodstream.[190]

188 S. de Ricci, ***Reliefs and Plaquettes*** (1931), 135, no. 174. Ricci correctly identifies that the earliest and best states of the relief retain the little angel while lacking the aureoles and background cross.

189 H. Belting, ***Giovanni Bellini: Pietà*** (Frankfurt, 1985), 20, fig. 3; Lewis 1989, 114.

190 V. Zani, "Una copia del Sacrificio del Mausoleo Martinengo e alcune note iconografiche e stilistiche," ***Antiqua nuova serie*** (2013).

Fig. 39: Parcel-gilt silver *Reliquary of San Nazaro Maggiore*, 4th century, presumed used by Ambrose in 386 to transport the relics of the apostles from Rome to Milan for the consecration of the basilica *Apostolorum* (Museo Diocesano, Milan, inv. MD 2004.115.001).

The pathos of Galeazzo's *Pietà* inherently recalls the emotive intensity of Northern European *Vesperbilder*. This visual resonance naturally prompts the question of whether Galeazzo's design was initially inspired by imported Northern models. However, research by Bertrand Bergbauer into the widespread dissemination of this image reveals the exact opposite trajectory. Rather than Galeazzo deriving his work from a Northern painting, his highly portable bronze matrices

Zani notes that the rare iconography of the ***Sacrifice*** and ***Battle*** roundels carved by Cairano derive from the "aulic examples" of contemporary bronzework, specifically citing the plaquettes of Moderno and Andrea Riccio as the primary conduits for these antiquarian themes in Northern Italy.

Fig. 38 (facing page): Enlarged image of a parcel-gilt silver relief of the *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Six Saints (Small Sacra Conversazione)* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1502-03 (Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. M138-1921).

crossed the Alps and became the authoritative source material that fueled a generation of Northern painters. When one of these plaquettes reached the Low Countries, it attracted the attention of Jan Sanders van Hemessen, who painted an enlarged version of it around 1530 or 1540 (Museum Henri Boez, Maubeuge). Hemessen's adaptation—rather than direct knowledge of Galeazzo's plaquette—subsequently served as the prototype for a substantial serialized production by the Master of the Prodigal Son in Antwerp (c. 1535–1560) (fig. 37).[191] The exceptionally popular composition resulted in an engraving and numerous painted reproductions over a long period. While the exact reason for this explosive popularity remains unclear, it is possible that the original plaquette—or one of its painted iterations—was believed to have worked a miracle.

For an ambitious Northern Italian goldsmith and lapidary at the close of the Quattrocento, the ultimate destination was inevitably Milan. Under the rule of Ludovico Sforza ("il Moro"), the city functioned as the epicenter of the luxury arts in Europe, boasting a concentration of wealth, aristocratic display, and technical expertise that overshadowed its neighbors.

While modern historiography primarily celebrates Galeazzo for his serial bronze plaquettes, his contemporaries esteemed him equally as a master of precious stones. Giorgio Vasari recorded Galeazzo as a highly capable gem-engraver who personally instructed the celebrated glyptic artist Matteo del Nassaro.[192] For a master lapidary, the Sforza court—which heavily sponsored the carving of rock crystal, cameos, and engraved gems—offered unparalleled opportunities. Galeazzo's natural gravitation toward Milan would have been greatly facilitated by the deep dynastic ties linking his established patrons. Isabella d'Este in Mantua and her father Ercole I d'Este in Ferrara maintained constant, intimate contact with the Sforza court through Isabella's sister, Beatrice d'Este, who was married to Ludovico il Moro. The Este-Gonzaga-Sforza network provided a seamless diplomatic and artistic corridor through which a favored court artist could travel and secure elite employment.

Operating in Milan during this period inherently meant engaging with the profoundly transformative aesthetic climate cultivated at the Sforza court, an environment thoroughly dominated by the innovations of Leonardo da Vinci. Leonardo's intensive studies of human anatomy, dynamic equestrian combat, and the *moti dell'anima* (the psychological expressions of the soul) permeated the workshops of Milanese painters, sculptors, and metalworkers, such as the esteemed goldsmith Caradosso Foppa.[193] Galeazzo's exposure to this progressive, highly intellectual environment catalyzed his mature style. The fluid, twisting anatomies, the psychological pathos of his mourners, and the intricate spatial staging that define his later masterpieces reflect a sophisticated assimilation of these Lombard developments. This immersion in the Milanese milieu expanded Galeazzo's visual vocabulary, permanently infusing his classicizing Veronese foundation with the dynamic psychological and spatial innovations of the High Renaissance.

The conceptual seeds for Galeazzo's late, monumental works were often planted during this highly inventive, transitional phase characterized by a dense, miniaturist aesthetic. A prime example of this style is a small plaquette depicting the *Virgin and Child Enthroned with Six Saints* (the *Small Sacra Conversazione*) (fig. 38). While scholars such as Lewis have reasonably argued for an earlier dating of circa 1488–1490 based on the relief's structural

191 B. Bergbauer, "Moderno et les peintres. Autour des derives anversois d'une plaquette italienne," ***Revue de l'Art***, 167 (2010): 31–40.

192 G. Vasari, *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (1568). Vasari notes Mondella's skill as a lapidary and his instruction of Matteo del Nassaro in Verona; see also Lewis 1989, 105.

193 For the influence of Leonardo's environment on Milanese metalworkers and Caradosso Foppa, see Venturelli 2002, 145–157.

reliance on Lorenzo Costa's 1488 fresco in Bologna,[194] the intense "busyness" and miniaturist density of its background—filled with individuated candelabra and pendant trophies—suggests it belongs to a slightly later window. When grouped with his other highly compacted, ornamental works of this type, the *Small Sacra Conversazione* appears to be the direct product of a brief excursion to Milan in the early sixteenth century. While the architectural structure of the relief certainly does appear inspired by Costa's painting, the figures themselves do not necessarily share this derivation.

In fact, the male figures on the left side of the *Small Sacra Conversazione* seem to echo those found on the *Capsella di San Nazaro*, a renowned silver-gilt reliquary housed in Milan (fig. 39).[195] The *Capsella* was officially discovered beneath the altar of the Basilica Apostolorum by San Carlo Borromeo in 1578, leading some scholars to skeptically propose that the relic might actually be a late sixteenth-century forgery that copied Galeazzo's design, as regards his larger *Sacra Conversazione* (fig. 64).[196] However, the reliquary's authenticity as a fourth-century object is defended by others,[197] and it remains probable the ancient casket was exhibited during special solemn feasts during the early sixteenth century. This is bolstered by the fact that the Milanese painter Bramantino similarly quoted the central figure of Mary from the *Capsella* in

Fig. 40: Small bronze plaquette of *The Entombment* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1502-07 (National Gallery of Art, DC., inv. 1957.14.365).

Fig. 41: Bronze plaquette, in the form of an antique oil lamp lid, depicting *The Judgment of Solomon* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1504-07 (Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. A-432.1910).

his own work.[198] Assuming Galeazzo studied its antique forms firsthand during his Lombard stay, the intimate scale, densely packed ornamentation, and direct visual quotation of a famous Milanese reliquary raise an intriguing possibility regarding the original function of the *Small Sacra Conversazione* plaquette. It is tempting to consider that it was originally conceived as a desktop casket lid, functioning as a pseudo-attempt to emulate the physical form of the fourth-century *Capsella*. The viability of this specific format is interestingly echoed in a nineteenth-century pastiche of Galeazzo's design, which physically utilizes the

194 Lewis 1989, 112. Lewis notes that the "essential source for this graceful exemplar of late fifteenth-century attenuated classicism is Lorenzo Costa's fresco of 1488... in Bologna."

195 The connection between Moderno's designs and the ***Capsella di San Nazaro*** (specifically Side C, depicting Joseph judging his brothers) has been explored by Attilio Troncavini. See Attilio Troncavini, "La Capsella di San Nazaro e il Moderno," ***Antiqua*** (2018).

196 Troncavini notes that the striking visual affinities have led some authors to question the authenticity of the ***Capsella***, supposing it to have been manufactured at the end of the sixteenth century on the commission of San Carlo Borromeo.

197 Gemma Sena Chiesa strongly defends the fourth-century authenticity and dating of the piece in the catalogue of the Museo Diocesano di Milano, addressing iconographic "inconsistencies" raised by skeptics.

198 F. Slavazzi, in ***Il Tesoro di San Nazaro*** (2009). Slavazzi notes that scenes from the ***Capsella*** inspired Bramantino's 1495 ***Adoration of the Magi*** (National Gallery, London), arguing that the reliquary must have been visible during special occasions long before Borromeo's 1578 intervention. (See also Troncavini 2018).

Fig. 42: Bronze plaquette of *Medusa* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1503-07 (Ashmolean Museum., inv. WA1888.CDEF.B662).

relief in exactly this manner, as the lid of a small casket, produced by the Edward F. Caldwell & Co., NY.

Scholars such as John Pope-Hennessy and Jeremy Warren have highlighted the unique, almost "untypical" ornamental complexity of this *Small Sacra Conversazione* (fig. 38).[199] The sheer wealth of microscopic detail includes a throne base decorated with tritons and an upper frieze featuring a tiny, self-referential relief of *Hercules Seizing the Cattle of Geryon*.[200] These elements showcase Galeazzo's ability to compress monumental, classicizing forms into a precious, jewel-like format, creating a dynamic surface tension that characterizes his work just prior to his later Roman departure.

The conceptual seeds planted in this small plaquette ultimately blossomed into his grand Vienna *Sacra Conversazione* (c. 1508–1509), a masterpiece that, despite its later date, still bears the indelible mark of his time in Milan (fig. 64).[201] As Attilio Troncavini has recently demonstrated, the visual vocabulary of the Vienna relief suggests Galeazzo indeed possessed direct knowledge of the *Capsella*.[202] Troncavini points out striking visual affinities between the figures on the side of the *Capsella* (depicting Joseph judging his brothers) and Galeazzo's relief (fig. 39).[203] Most notably, the anatomical cuirass worn by Galeazzo's Saint George mirrors the ancient attire of one of Joseph's younger brothers on the reliquary.[204]

The brilliant synthesis of Lombard miniaturist density, early Christian antiquities studied in Milan, and his own evolving compositional balance inaugurated a prolific transitional period for Galeazzo. It paved the way for a quantity of additional pre-Roman productions that share this specific stylistic treatment, bridging the gap between his northern Italian roots and his ultimate High Renaissance maturity.

Moderno's capacity for realizing microscopic monumentality is further epitomized in an exceedingly rare pendant pair of plaquettes representing the *Small Madonna and Child with Two Kneeling Angels* and the *Small Entombment of Christ* (fig. 40).[205] Dating to roughly 1503–1507, these tiny triumphs of small-scale design condense enormous emotive power into fields measuring scarcely four centimeters high. In the *Small Madonna*, the Virgin's dynamically twisted pose is framed by a tapestried baldachin featuring free-hanging pendants of three-dimensional *grotteschi*—a highly original ornamental conceit that Galeazzo developed during this transitional window.[206] The pendant *Small Entombment* masterfully updates the sarcophagus and the attitude of Christ's body from Lancillotto's earlier, late-Quattrocento *Lamentation*,

199 Warren 2014, 841, no. 297; Pope-Hennessy, John. "The Study of Italian Plaquettes." In ***Italian Plaquettes***, edited by Alison Luchs, 19–32. Studies in the History of Art 22. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989, 27.

200 Pope-Hennessy 1989, 27; Lewis 1989, 112. The inclusion of the ***Hercules*** scene is a direct quotation from his own earlier series of the Labors of Hercules.

201 Warren 2014, 841, no. 297. Warren confirms the small plaquette predates the large Vienna silver-gilt version.

202 Troncavini 2018.

203 Ibid.

204 Ibid. Troncavini notes that the specific ***chitone*** worn like an anatomical cuirass on the ***Capsella*** is replicated in Moderno's Saint George.

205 Lewis 1989, 126-127, figs. 37 and 38. Examples of both the ***Small Madonna*** (Inv. 260-1864) and ***Small Entombment*** (Inv. A.451-1910) are in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

206 Ibid., 127.

translating them into a remarkably fluent, classicizing idiom.[207]

Galeazzo's ability to adapt these monumental narratives into diminutive, utilitarian luxury objects is perhaps best exemplified by two curvilinear, pear-shaped plaquettes designed as lids for neo-antique oil lamps. While Lewis dates these works to the same 1504–1507 window, they function as a brilliant testament to Galeazzo's foundational training as a jeweler and lapidary. One lid features the *Judgment of Solomon* (fig. 41)—an allegory of Temperance—while its pendant depicts the remaining theological virtues of *Justice, Prudence, and Fortitude*.[208] The exergues of both lamplids are filled with the same intricately scaled *grotteschi* found in his other transitional works, cementing their place in this intensely ornamental phase.

This period of localized Lombard influence and ornamental experimentation also witnessed the creation of his *Medusa* roundel. The plaquette features a winged, full-faced Medusa whose serpentine hair intertwines with a pair of dawdling boy genii (or putti) grasping the molded border (fig. 42).[209] The unique, playful treatment of these putti provides a diagnostic link that allows us to securely reattribute another contested work to Galeazzo's autograph *oeuvre*.

In his 1965 catalog of the National Gallery of Art, John Pope-Hennessy published an *Ornamental Frieze* fragment, but ultimately discounted its traditional association with Moderno.[210] However, the truncated frieze can now be definitively reclaimed for the master thanks to the survival of a longer, complete version of the casting integrated into the lower predella of a rare pax frame currently in the collection of Roger Arvid Anderson (fig. 43). The object is a composite masterpiece of Galeazzo's transitional period: it houses an early cast of his *Crucifixion* plaquette (fig. 20), framed by flanking pilasters that clearly betray his fresh Milanese influence. Most revealingly, the pax's unique tympanum features a scrolling motif occupied by two flanking, inverted putti. The distinct morphology and execution of these putti directly echo the genii on the *Medusa* plaquette, demonstrating that the entire architectural frame, the tympanum, and the lower ornamental frieze are the autograph inventions of Galeazzo. As a unified architectural construct, the Anderson frame represents a decisive evolution from the more rigid, archaically styled *Madonna and Child with Saints* pax of 1490 (fig. 1), vividly illustrating how Galeazzo's Lombard sojourn modernized his approach to classical ornament and structural design.[211]

207 Ibid.

208 Ibid., 127–128, figs. 39 and 40. Lewis dates the lamp lids to c. 1504/1507 and notes the *Judgment of Solomon* adapts a figure from his 1504 medal of *Opportunity Seizing Time*.

209 Warren 2014, 868–869, no. 326. The widespread popularity of the *Medusa* is evidenced by its later use on the 1540 coffin plate of Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg, alongside Moderno's *Entombment*.

210 Pope-Hennessy 1965, discussing the *Ornamental Frieze*. The association of this frieze with Moderno is exemplified by the intact pax frame in the Roger Arvid Anderson collection.

211 We may also note here, Bange 1922 (no. 489), which is another independent frieze which follows these stylized motifs and was attributed to Moderno.

Fig. 43: Bronze pax with the *Crucifixion* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1503-07 (collection of Roger Arvid Anderson, Hood Museum, inv. 2016.64.118).


107
I695 o
I696 I
MODERNO
2016.64.118

VI.

THE CULTURE OF THE SWORD

The zenith of Galeazzo's medallic experiments in Mantua—and the perfect encapsulation of his transition into a fully mature, classicizing style—is the medal of *Maddalena Mantuana*, dated November 20, 1504 (fig. 44).[212] Here, Galeazzo achieves the quintessential Renaissance medallic ideal: a perfectly resolved balance between a sensitive, naturalistic portrait obverse and an intellectually charged, allegorical reverse.

The reverse of the *Maddalena Mantuana* medal features an elaborate depiction of *Opportunity Seizing Time* (or *Occasio and Poenitentia*). The motif was deeply rooted in classical literature—specifically the epigrams of Ausonius—and enjoyed a well-diffused visual legacy in the Renaissance, appearing in the milieu of Andrea Mantegna (most notably in a Mantuan fresco of the subject) and subsequently reproduced by artists such as Girolamo da Santacroce.[213] However, Galeazzo translates this humanist trope into a purely rhythmic, calligraphic triumph, fully weaponizing the fluid, psychological dynamism he had recently absorbed in Milan. The two lithe, diaphanously draped female figures run freely across a simple exergue line, their extended limbs and fluttering tresses creating a visual poetry that anticipates the High Renaissance.[214]

The stylistic breakthroughs Galeazzo achieved in Milan and Brescia—a synthesis of microscopic precision and fluid, classicizing grace—were fully realized upon his return to the Mantuan orbit. The 1504 *Maddalena Mantuana* medal was not an isolated triumph, but rather the catalyst for a broader suite of independent masterworks.

Fig. 44: Bronze medal obverse of *Magdalena Mantuana* attributed to Galeazzo Mondella, 1504, with a reverse of *Opportunity Seizing Time* (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1957.14.1321.a,b).

Chief among these is his spectacular circular plaquette of *Mars Enjoying Victory* (fig. 48). The intricate, graceful energy of this composition is intimately tied to the *Maddalena* medal; in fact, the monumental epigraphy encircling the finished state of the *Mars Enjoying Victory* plaquette is identical to the treatment of the 1504 medal, encouraging their near contemporaneous execution.[215]

Galeazzo fluidly translated these successful motifs across different mediums and formats. From the *Maddalena* reverse, he lifted the billowing, diaphanous figure of *Opportunity* and re-deployed her—now adorned with wings—as the triumphant *Nike* in his celebrated *Mars and Victory* plaquette (fig. 32).[216] The sheer popularity of these specific inventions during Galeazzo's own lifetime is staggering. His master models were rapidly diffused and pirated by foundries and sculptors across Europe. For example, the *Mars and Victory* composition crossed the Alps and was reproduced in bronze on the basin of a baptismal font in Chalon-sur-Saône, France, dated 1520, and shortly thereafter was carved into the monumental stone

212 Lewis 1987, 86-87.

213 The motif of *Occasio and Poenitentia* (or Opportunity and Time) has deep classical roots, most notably in the epigrams of Ausonius, and was famously explored by Andrea Mantegna in Mantua, later influencing artists like Girolamo da Santacroce who deployed the same motif in his ca. 1485 Narcissus at the Source, preserved at the Jacquemart Andre Museum (inv. MJAP-P3035).

214 Lewis 1987, 86. Moderno's fluid treatment of the figures is internally dated by the medal's obverse inscription to November 20, 1504.

215 Ibid., 86-87. The epigraphy confirms Moderno's authorship of the *Mars Enjoying Victory* tondo.

216 Ibid. Lewis notes the direct derivation of the *Mars and Victory* plaquette's winged Nike from the figure of Opportunity on the 1504 medal.

frieze of the Château de Montal (c. 1527).[217]

Armed with these Mantuan successes, Galeazzo decisively penetrated the highest echelons of the Venetian Republic. He did so by capitalizing on the burgeoning Renaissance fashion of the civilian "dress sword" (*spada da lato*). During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the sword evolved from a strictly martial weapon into a vital accessory of fashionable patrician dress.[218] This created a highly lucrative market for goldsmith-designed, allegorical sword hilts intended to project the wearer's erudition, martial prowess, and social status. The demand was so robust that some highly skilled Northern Italian contemporaries, such as Giovanni Francesco Furnio (the Monogrammist IO.F.F.), dedicated their practices almost exclusively to producing intricate bronze plaquettes destined to serve as sword pommels.[219]

Galeazzo quickly established himself as the premier designer of these luxury weapons in Venice. Around 1504–1505, he received a major commission to design a pair of butterfly-shaped plaquettes to serve as the obverse and reverse of a magnificent sword pommel. The obverse featured two sequential scenes of the *Continence of Scipio*, while the reverse displayed an *Allegory of Victory* prominently featuring the Winged Lion of Saint Mark clutching the open Gospel—an emblem of the Venetian State (fig. 45).[220]

As Douglas Lewis ascertained, the iconography suggests the original weapon was commissioned

Fig. 45: Pair of bronze sword hilts depicting the *Continence of Scipio* (above) and an *Allegory of Victory* (below) by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1504-05 (Museo Nazionale del Bargello, invs. 438C and 439C).

217 M. Riddick, "Glyptics, Italian Plaquettes in France and their Reproduction in Enamel," ***Renbronze.com*** (2019). The ***Mars and Victory*** appear on the 1520 Chalon-sur-Saône font and the c. 1527 Château de Montal.

218 T. Capwell, "A Dress Sword of the Italian Renaissance," ***The Noble Art of the Sword: Fashion and Fencing in Renaissance Europe 1520–1630*** (Wallace Collection, 2012).

219 For the Monogrammist IO.F.F. and his near-exclusive focus on sword pommels, see Capwell 2012 and Pope-Hennessy 1964, 63; and M. Riddick (2026), From Sacred Silver to Secular Steel: The Master IO.F.F., Renbronze.com.

220 Lewis 1989, 127-128.

Fig. 46 (facing page): Detail of an oil-on-panel painting of the *Madonna and Child with John the Baptist and St. Paul* by Cima da Conegliano, ca. 1504-05 (Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice, inv. 603).

by Giorgio Cornaro the Elder (1454–1527), the preeminent military commander of the Republic, whose elite family claimed direct lineage from the ancient Roman *Cornelii* clan of Scipio Africanus.[221] The prestige of this design was absolute: another surviving sword bearing this exact pommel features the coat of arms of the aristocratic Erizzo family, and the completed hilt was immortalized by the Venetian painter Cima da Conegliano as the weapon of Saint Paul in a devotional panel executed precisely around 1504–1505 (fig. 46).[222] The success of the pommel inevitably led to its adaptation into other formats for the collector's cabinet; a circular variant of the *Continence of Scipio* (such as the example in Berlin, Bange 1922, no. 461) is almost certainly a secondary modification, altered from the original, masterfully silhouetted butterfly-hilt design to satisfy the broader plaquette market.

In tandem with the lavish sword pommels produced for clients like the Cornaro and Erizzo, Galeazzo's workshop also generated specialized mounts for other elements of elite martial attire. This is brilliantly evidenced by a pair of highly unusual, cartouche-like oblong plaquettes. The first features a central rectangular relief of *Hercules and the Nemean Lion*, flanked above by a medallion of the *Judgment of Solomon* and below by *Hercules and Achelous*. Its pendant centers on the centaur *Nessus Abducting Deianira*, flanked by an *Allegory of Victory* and *Hercules Shooting the Stymphalian Birds* (fig. 47).[223]

These elaborate vertical compositions—anchored by central rectangular scenes and flanked by circular medallions supported by tiny putti—have long puzzled scholars. Gaston Migeon early on suggested they were intended to decorate a luxury

Fig. 47: Pair of bronze plaquettes (bandoliers?) depicting *Nessus and Deianira, with an allegory of Victory and Hercules and the Styphalian Birds* (left) and *Hercules and the Nemean Lion, with the Judgement of Solomon and Hercules and Achelous* (right) by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1507 (Ashmolean Museum, invs. WA1888.CDEF.B642 and WA1888.CDEF.B641).

Fig. 48 (facing page): Enlarged detail of a gilt bronze plaquette of *Mars Enjoying Victory* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1502-03 (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1957.14.309).

221 Ibid. Lewis establishes the Cornaro attribution via the Scipio iconography and the Venetian Lion of Saint Mark.

222 Ibid. The Erizzo sword was sold in New York in 1929. Cima da Conegliano's painting (***Madonna and Child with Saint Paul and Saint John the Baptist***) provides a strict ***terminus ante quem*** of c. 1504–1505.

223 Warren 2014, 859-861, nos. 317 and 318.

sword scabbard, while their specific oblong, vertical orientation suggests they were designed as ornamental mounts for a leather chest strap (a baldric or bandolier) worn by a patrician warrior. Such elaborately decorated martial accessories were highly fashionable in the Renaissance, forming a crucial part of the "dress sword" ensemble and the wider culture of luxury *all'antica* armor that telegraphed a commander's status and erudition.[224]

Lewis securely dates these models to c. 1500–1505, noting that their *terminus ante quem* is firmly established by October 1507, when the sculptor Giancristoforo Romano appropriated Moderno's top *Victory* medallion, converting the figure to an allegory of Peace, serving as the reverse of a medal for Isabella of Aragon. This borrowing is noteworthy as Romano served as chief sculptor and medalist to Isabella d'Este. His access to and use of Galeazzo's inventions illustrates Galeazzo's continued, prestigious connections within the Mantuan orbit and his enduring ties to the Este court.[225]

If these were indeed intended for a warrior's baldric or scabbard, their iconographic program is a masterwork of Renaissance martial philosophy. The predominant Herculean themes—the Nemean Lion, Achelous, Nessus, and the Stymphalian Birds—project the wearer's raw physical prowess and the triumph of heroic virtue over bestial fury. Yet, Galeazzo brilliantly balances this brute strength by including the *Judgment of Solomon*, an emblem of the profound judicial wisdom and intellectual restraint required of an ideal military commander. When these dual virtues—strength and wisdom—are combined, they inevitably yield the ultimate outcome depicted in the final medallion: *Victory*. Worn across the chest of a Venetian patrician or *condottiero*, these reliefs transformed functional leather straps into an articulate manifesto of the wearer's right to command.

Beyond the martial realm of dress swords, Galeazzo also dominated the market for intimate domestic devotional objects in Venice. The

Fig. 49: Bronze desktop utensil plaquette depicting a *Roman General Crowned between Minerva and Victory* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1503-07 (private collection)

Fig. 50: Pen and brown ink drawing of a *Roman General Crowned between Minerva and Victory* by Cesare da Sesto (after Galeazzo Mondella?), ca. 1505-12 (Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, inv. KdZ 5199)

224 For the suggestion that these vertically oriented reliefs functioned as mounts for a scabbard, see G. Migeon, ***Les Arts*** 80 (August 1908), 20; and Migeon, ***Catalogue des bronzes & cuivres*** (1904), 254–255. For the broader context of luxury dress swords, ornamental mounts, and ***all'antica*** armor, see Capwell 2012, and Belozerskaya 2005, 160.

225 Lewis 1987, 86-89. Lewis establishes the dating of these reliefs to c. 1500–1505 based on Giancristoforo Romano's 1507 borrowing of the ***Victory*** medallion. For Romano's role as a primary sculptor and medalist for Isabella d'Este in Mantua, see also C. Vecce, "'The Sculptor Says': Leonardo and Gian Cristoforo Romano," ***Illuminating Leonardo*** (2016), 231.

most prominent example from this period is his *Madonna and Child in a Niche Between Two Standing Angels*. The immediate Venetian appetite for this specific pax-like relief is proven by early, high-quality gilded casts bearing the inscribed names of prominent Venetian patricians, such as Piero Francesco Malipiero. Furthermore, these objects became cherished family heirlooms; one early cast in Washington features an inscription for Flavio Cicogna (FLAVIVS CICO[NIVS] L MEVANAS) alongside the added date of 1552, proving these reliefs functioned as active, personalized instruments of daily piety long after Galeazzo's death. This demonstrates that Galeazzo's inventions were not only collected as antiquarian curiosities, but functioned as active, personalized instruments of daily piety within the highest tiers of Venetian society.[226]

While his luxury weaponry adorned the waists of Venetian commanders, Galeazzo also focused on producing small-scale reliefs intended to decorate functional desktop objects, such as inkwells and caskets, prior to his Roman sojourn. A memory of this highly specialized production survives in an exceedingly rare, small rectangular plaquette depicting a *Roman General Crowned between Minerva and Victory* (fig. 49).[227]

The scale and formatting of this relief indicate it was conceived to be mounted on a domestic casket. More importantly, this specific composition provides a fascinating documentary bridge between Galeazzo's Northern career and his impending Roman period. The composition of the scene is mirrored in a pen-and-ink sketch by the Milanese painter Cesare da Sesto, executed while Cesare was in Rome between 1505 and 1512 (fig. 50).[228]

Cesare was an apt, habitual copyist of other masters' works (frequently reproducing Leonardo and Michelangelo).[229] While it is possible Galeazzo and Cesare first encountered one another during Galeazzo's brief Milanese excursion earlier in the decade, Cesare's Roman sketch implies that Galeazzo brought his personal drafts, sketches and perhaps the plaquettes themselves with him when he relocated to the papal capital in 1508. Cesare's possible awareness of Galeazzo's compositions while in Rome may relate to Ulrich Middeldorf's observation that Sesto's *Adoration of the Magi* altarpiece in Naples appears related to Galeazzo's *Presentation in the Temple*, which Sesto presumably sketched and took with him to Naples following his period in Rome.

That Galeazzo actively carried a portfolio of designs into Rome is proven by his own subsequent work. When Galeazzo later designed his small, circular seal matrix of *Vulcan, Victory, and Cupid* (fig. 53d), he directly lifted and repurposed the exact figure of Minerva from the *Roman General* plaquette to serve as his new Victory.[230] This working method reveals a highly organized master who continuously mined his own meticulously kept sketchbooks, adapting brilliant motifs from his Northern desktop objects into the glyptic seals and grand silver reliefs he would soon execute for the Roman elite.

226 Lewis 1989, 128-129. Lewis anchors the ***Madonna and Child*** to c. 1505–1507, identifying the Cicogna and Malipiero casts, and noting the 1552 date was likely added later to a blank field by a successive generation on the Cicogna example.

227 Riddick 2025. The relief is known in only a few examples, including one in Berlin and a private collection.

228 Ibid. The drawing by Cesare da Sesto (Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen, Berlin, inv. KdZ 5199) dates to his time in Rome, c. 1508-1510.

229 Elizabeth H. Bernick, Drawing Connections: New Discoveries Regarding Cesare Da Sesto's Sketchbook in Master Drawings 57, no. 2 (2019): 147–96.

230 Riddick 2025. The connection between the Minerva of the rectangular relief and the small ***Vulcan, Victory, and Cupid*** seal (National Gallery of Art, inv. 1957.14.311) demonstrates his reuse of models across formats.

VII.

THE ROMAN ZENITH

Having firmly re-established his local standing upon his Lombard excursion, Galeazzo Mondella served his second term as the *massaro* (president) of the local goldsmiths' guild during the years 1506 and 1507.[231] It was likely during this period of heightened local prestige that Galeazzo took on a remarkably gifted new apprentice, Matteo del Nassaro, the son of a local shoemaker named Jacopo, who had recently returned to Verona following a period of musical training in Mantua.[232] Archival documents securely locate the Nassaro family residence in the *contrada* of San Giovanni in Valle, with earlier ties to the adjacent parish of San Vitale. Following the 1496 division of the Mondella family firm, Galeazzo established his perpetual residence in the neighboring *contrada* of Santa Maria in Organo, while his brother Girolamo operated his highly successful workshop just streets away in San Salvaro. Because all of these parishes formed a densely packed, interconnected community on the east bank of the Adige River (in what is now the Veronetta district), Galeazzo and the Nassaro family were effectively neighbors. Given this geographic intimacy, it was entirely natural for the young Nassaro to seek training in the glyptic arts from his own district's most celebrated craftsman, who was concurrently serving as the sitting head of the goldsmiths' guild.[233]

However, Galeazzo's ambitions soon outgrew the provincial boundaries of the Veneto. A documentary anchor reveals that in May 1508, Galeazzo officially settled the financial accounts of his *massaria* with his brother Girolamo, who was presumably again elected to adopt the same role following the tenure of his younger brother.[234] This formal reconciliation of his guild obligations acts as a definitive *terminus post quem* for Galeazzo's departure. Having effectively closed out his local administrative duties, Galeazzo turned his sights toward the ultimate epicenter of High Renaissance patronage and classical antiquity: the Rome of Pope Julius II.

Galeazzo probably did not make this journey alone; the evidence suggests he brought his promising pupil, Matteo del Nassaro, with him. This shared migration offers a resolution to Giorgio Vasari's otherwise confusing testimony that Nassaro was a pupil of both 'Mondella' and another Veronese gem-engraver, Niccolò Avanzi.[235] Rather than training with these masters in separate cities at different times (Avanzi was chiefly active in Rome, for example), the young Nassaro accompanied Galeazzo to the papal capital. There, the master, his pupil, and their compatriot Avanzi would successfully intersect, forming a close-knit, Veronese glyptic enclave in the heart of Rome.

Arriving in Rome around 1508, Galeazzo was thrust into a city undergoing an unprecedented archaeological and artistic renaissance. The defining event of this era was the sensational

231 Chiappa 2016, 121, Doc. 2. Chiappa transcribes the chronology of Galeazzo, noting his 1506–1507 term as *massaro*.

232 Giorgio Vasari notes Nassaro's early musical inclinations and noble connections in Mantua before detailing his glyptic career. Vasari 1568, Life of Valerio Vicentino, Giovanni da Castel Bolognese, Matteo dal Nasaro, etc.

233 For the archival documentation placing the Nassaro family in San Giovanni in Valle and San Vitale, see L. Rognini, "Precisazioni sulle origini dei Caroto e di Matteo Dal Nassaro," *Vita Veronese* (1974). For the specific Mondella residences in Santa Maria in Organo and San Salvaro, see Rognini 1975. Vasari notes that when Matteo briefly returned to Verona from France following the Battle of Pavia in 1525, he set up a picturesque temporary workshop in a cave excavated beneath the garden of the Jesuati friars at San Girolamo—which is located right in this exact same eastern hillside district. G. Vasari 1568.

234 Chiappa 2016, 121, Doc. 2. Citing the May 1508 settlement of his guild accounts with his brother Girolamo. While the sources do not explicitly state that Girolamo was elected as the *massaro* for the 1508–1509 term, in typical guild administration, an outgoing official must clear their financial balances with the incoming administration, and his role in this capacity can thus be presumed. Galeazzo, knowing that his brother was officially "holding down the fort" in Verona, would have given him the confidence to travel and pursue high-profile commissions at the papal court. Further, with his son being only two years of age in the care of the child's mom, this element of his personal life would also have been handled (see chapter 8).

235 Vasari 1568. Vasari links Nassaro's training to both "Mondella" and Niccolò Avanzi, an overlap logically explained by their shared expatriate presence in Rome between 1508 and 1512.

discovery of the *Laocoön* group on January 14, 1506, unearthed in a vineyard on the Esquiline Hill (fig. 51).[236] Pope Julius II quickly acquired the Hellenistic masterwork and installed it in the Belvedere courtyard by early July of that year, where it became an instant touchstone for artists across Europe.

For Galeazzo, the *Laocoön* provided the ultimate *imago doloris* (image of sorrow), fundamentally altering his approach to the human form. He immediately appropriated the anguished, twisting torso of the Trojan priest for the figure of Christ in his autograph masterpiece, the silver *Flagellation* relief (fig. 63).[237] In adapting this pagan prototype for a Christian context, Galeazzo not only replicated the statue's muscular torsion, tilted head, and asymmetrical stance, but he actively engaged in a process of creative restoration. Because the ancient marble was discovered missing its right arm, Galeazzo freely reimagined the limb for his Christ, binding it securely above the head to the column, thereby demonstrating his ability to not merely copy the antique, but to dynamically complete and reinvent it.[238]

Beyond freestanding statuary, Galeazzo's Roman immersion exposed him to the city's monumental triumphal architecture, prompting a dramatic stylistic shift away from the angular, attenuated forms of his Quattrocento roots toward a heavier, volumetric, and vigorously animated classicism. To explain Galeazzo's sudden mastery of Roman triumphal architecture, generations of scholars have reasonably relied upon Vasari's testimony, which claimed that "Mondella the Veronese" possessed and traveled with the illuminated papers of his compatriot, the painter and antiquarian Giovanni Maria Falconetto. Because Falconetto spent twelve years studying in Rome, it has been traditionally hypothesized that Galeazzo adapted his magnificent plaquettes of military conflict—namely the *Battle Scene* (fig. 55) and the *Lion Hunt* (fig. 58)—from Falconetto's antiquarian field sketches of the Arch of Constantine.[239]

However, modern archival discoveries clear the academic record on this matter, revealing that Vasari actually conflated Galeazzo Mondella with his son and successor, the goldsmith Giambattista Mondella.[240] Archival documents demonstrate that it was Giambattista—a generation later—who was intimately connected to the Falconetto family. Specifically, Giambattista is recorded in 1567 assisting in the estate inventory of Angelo Falconetto, alongside the artist Paolo Farinati.[241] Furthermore, these same documents record that Angelo Falconetto's estate held debts owed to the Venetian nobleman Girolamo Lioni—the exact same collector whom Vasari names as having

236 Lewis 1989, 130.

237 Lamouche 2018, 120. Lamouche notes Moderno as one of the first artists to repurpose the ***Laocoön*** as an ***imago doloris*** for his ***Flagellation***.

238 Gagetti 2007, 457. Gagetti details how Moderno utilized the exact torsion, head inclination, and leg positioning of the ***Laocoön*** for his Christ in the ***Flagellation***, creatively adapting the missing right arm.

239 Lewis 1989, 124–125; Vasari 1568, 5:318. Vasari records Mondella carrying Falconetto's miniatures, logically prompting Lewis to hypothesize the transmission of Roman motifs via this graphic route.

240 For Vasari's conflation and Giambattista Mondella's assumption of his father's workshop following Galeazzo's death in 1528, see G. Sava, "Giovanni Antonio Falconetto Pittore di Belli Animali," (2011), 20; and L. Rognini, "Notizie su Angelo Falconetto, Giampaolo Cimerlini e Giambattista Mondella," in ***Palladio e Verona*** (Verona, 1980), 329.

241 E. M. Guzzo, "Falconetto," in ***Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani***, XLIV (Roma, 1994), 346. Guzzo notes that the goldsmith Nicola Dalla Seta executed the inventory of Angelo Falconetto's goods after his death in 1567, in the presence of Giambattista Mondella. See also B. Jestaz, "Un fonds d'atelier de Battista del Moro (1573)," ***Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*** 44 (2000): 293.

Fig. 51 (facing page): Marble statue of *Laocoön and His Sons,* 1st century BC (Vatican Vity, Italy).

received the Falconetto miniatures.[242] Because Vasari mistakenly applied this mid-sixteenth-century anecdote about Giambattista to his father Galeazzo, the assumption that Moderno relied on Falconetto's sketches during his own career is historically inaccurate. Stripped of this graphic intermediary, it becomes clear that Galeazzo did not rely on a friend's portfolio; rather, he directly absorbed the chaotic, muscular battle scenes of the "Great Trajanic Frieze"—complete with rearing horses and tumbling barbarians—through his own firsthand observation while physically present in Rome, transforming them into fluently modeled, spatially complex matrices imbued with a newly realized High Renaissance grandeur.

Upon arriving in the papal capital, Galeazzo and his young apprentice Matteo del Nassaro immersed themselves in the vibrant, highly competitive artistic milieu sponsored by Pope Julius II. They soon intersected with another prominent expatriate from their hometown, the gem-engraver Niccolò Avanzi.

Documentary evidence anchors this Veronese network in Rome. Surviving correspondence from August and September 1512 between Isabella d'Este and her agents document Avanzi and his pupil "Matteo" residing in Rome, urgently working to complete a carved emerald of a *Christ at Calvary* for the Marchesa.[243] Operating within this collaborative, high-level workshop environment, Nassaro not only absorbed the technical mastery of his two Veronese mentors but was also granted direct access to Galeazzo's physical matrices and design repertoire—resources he would heavily rely upon in his later independent career.

Nassaro's heavy reliance on his master's graphic models underscores an aspect of Galeazzo's artistic personality that is frequently overlooked in modern plaquette literature, despite being edified by Vasari: his considerable talent as a draughtsman. While Vasari praised Galeazzo's graphic skills—noting that alongside engraving gems he "drew very well"—only two securely attributed sketches by his hand are known to survive today.[244] Both are preserved in the Louvre, depicting a *Triumph of Bacchus* and a *Drunkenness of Silenus* (fig. 52).[245]

The *Drunkenness of Silenus* bears an old, inscription along its lower right margin: *d. ma. d. mi. Galeazzo mondella. in. v.ona* ("from the hand of master, Galeazzo Mondella in Verona").[246] Although their scale is considerably larger than his miniature bronze reliefs, John Pope-Hennessy observed that the overarching repertory of poses and volumetric modeling in these drawings encourages Galeazzo's authorship.[247]

Furthermore, these drawings provide a vital window into the foundational visual vocabulary that Galeazzo carried with him throughout his career. Even as he absorbed the progressive, High Renaissance atmosphere of Rome, his graphic work betrays a profound, continuing indebtedness to Andrea Mantegna. The Louvre *Silenus* drawing, for instance, closely reproduces elements from the upper register of the *Virtus Combusta*—a prominent Mantegna-school engraving from the

242 Sava 2011, 20. Confirming the debt to "Messer Girolamo Lioni," verifying that Vasari's anecdote concerning the transmission of the Falconetto drawings to Lioni involved Giambattista, not Galeazzo.

243 For the correspondence documenting Avanzi and Nassaro in Rome, see Archivio di Stato di Mantova, b. 2996, l. 30, c. 28v (6 August 1512); c. 36v (19 August 1512); and c. 43v (3 September 1512). Isabella d'Este later called upon Avanzi in 1515 to retouch a damaged portion of the emerald. We might suggest that an *all'antica* portrait plaquette of Scipio Africanus known in various collections (Molinier, No. 49; Bange, No. 163, *et al*) could reproduce an original hardstone work made by Avanzi during this period. The fibula on this relief features a scene of Hercules and the Nemean Lion borrowing from Moderno's classically inspired motif and the quality of its execution relates to a similarly scaled lapis lazuli cameo portait of Alexander the Great probably by Avanzi (see Riddick 2023b).

244 Vasari 1568. Vasari states that Mondella "oltre all'intagliar le gioie, disegnò benissimo."

245 For the Louvre drawings (Invs. 5077 and 5078), see Gasparotto 2008b, 90.

246 Lewis 1989, 132, note 9. Lewis transcribes the inscription on the *Silenus* drawing (*d. ma. d. mi. Galeazzo mondella. in. v.ona*).

247 Pope-Hennessy 1964, 72-73. Pope-Hennessy notes that despite the larger scale of the Louvre drawings, the repertory of poses firmly connects them to the plaquettes.

Fig. 52: Brown ink with a pen and brown wash drawings of the Drunkenness of Silenus (above) and a Triumph of Bacchus (below) by Galeazzo Mondella, probably ca. 1490s (Louvre, invs. 5077 and 5078).

Figs. 53a-e: Bronze plaquettes reproducing seal matrices by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1508-12 (from top-left to bottom-right): a) *Marcus Curtius* (coll. Roger A. Anderson, Hood Museum [Hood], inv. 2016.64.165); b) *Kneeling Ma*n (National Gallery of Art, DC [NGA], inv. 1957.14.342); c) *Running Hercules* (NGA, inv. 1996.82.2); d) *Vulcan, Victory and Cupid* (Hood, inv. 2016.64.166); e) *David and Goliath* (NGA, inv. 1996.82.1).

1490s executed by Zoan Andrea, which itself was based directly on a Mantegna drawing now in the British Museum.[248] This reliance confirms that Galeazzo's draughtsmanship was deeply rooted in the severe, classicizing graphic tradition of the Venetan-Mantuan orbit. By mastering this rigorous, Mantegnesque linear style on paper, Galeazzo possessed the exact graphic fluency necessary to rapidly sketch complex Roman antiquities and transmit them successfully for future reference.

While Galeazzo's highly productive Roman period is often defined by his classicizing plaquettes, his foundational training as a Veronese goldsmith and lapidary found equal, if not more official, expression in the papal capital. According to a 1548 treatise by the Portuguese artist and theorist Francisco de Holanda, Galeazzo was highly celebrated in Rome as a maker of the lead seals (*bullae*) used by the papal chancery.[249]

Galeazzo's activity as a seal-engraver is physically preserved primarily in a series of "miniature tondi." Measuring a mere three to four centimeters in diameter—the standard size of Renaissance seals—these tiny bronze plaquettes almost certainly represent surviving workshop castings of his original seal matrices.[250] These small seals seamlessly carried over the expertise he had gained executing microscopic compositions in Milan, but now deeply reflected his newly acquired Roman classicism.

Among these miniature tondi is a beautifully executed pair depicting a *Running Hercules* (fig. 53c) and *David and Goliath* (fig. 53e), both produced

248 Lewis 1989, 132, note 9. Lewis notes the drawing's direct reliance on the Mantegna-school ***Virtus Combusta*** engraving by Zoan Andrea.

249 A. Raczynski, ***Les Arts en Portugal*** (Paris, 1846), 57. Transcribing Francisco de Holanda's 1548 treatise mentioning Moderno as a maker of the papal ***piombo***.

250 Riddick 2025. Identifying these 3–4 cm tondi as preserving Moderno's lead seal matrices.

Fig. 54: Bronze plaquette reproducing a seal matrix of a *Sculptor Carving a Statue of Cupid* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1508-12 (left) (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv.); marble *Cupid* attributed to Michelangelo, ca. 1490 (right) (French State, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, inv. L.2009.40).

around the same time and sharing an identical, heavy molded rim.[251] Other highly impressive uniface seal designs from this period include the *Opportunity Seizing Time*, reprising the reverse of his medal for Maddalena Mantuana (fig. 44).[252] It is a masterpiece of fluid grace showcasing his ability to render fluttering draperies and dynamic, interwoven figures on a microscopic scale. Another exquisite production from this period is a small, circular seal matrix depicting *Vulcan, Victory, and Cupid* (fig. 53d), earlier discussed in relation to his small *Roman General Crowned between Minerva and Victory* plaquette (fig. 49).

Furthermore, a tondo depicting a *Kneeling Man* (fig. 53b) shows a possible awareness of the famous *Arrotino* (Blade Sharpener) antiquity. While the exact discovery date of the *Arrotino* is unknown—it first appears in the 1520 inventory of the wealthy Roman banker Agostino Chigi—if Galeazzo's seal reproduces or was inspired by this figure, it suggests the antiquity was unearthed before Galeazzo's departure from Rome in 1512. Chigi's elite antiquarian collection would certainly have been of high interest to Galeazzo during his residency.

Of all his miniature tondi, one stands out as a particularly intriguing document. A small roundel, traditionally identified by Lewis as *Prometheus Creating Man*,[253] has also been cataloged more literally as a *Sculptor Carving a Statue of Cupid* (fig. 54, left). As noted by Pope-Hennessy, the carved child holds ribbons in both hands that support ornamental *cartelle* (medallions); while one appears blank, the other features a microscopic, nearly indecipherable scene that Pope-Hennessy read as "a chariot moving to the right preceded by a male figure."[254]

As a passing observation, it is tempting to wonder if this *Sculptor* relief bears a visual connection to Michelangelo's marble *Cupid* (now on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art), which was possibly housed in the Roman sculpture garden of the banker Jacopo Galli during Galeazzo's sojourn (fig. 54, right). If Galeazzo studied the statue *in situ* and modeled his seal matrix from it, the resulting bronze impression would naturally appear reversed, explaining the orientation of the figure in the plaquette. The proportions of the child relative to the bearded sculptor are commensurate with the three-foot-tall marble, and both the MET *Cupid* and the plaquette's *Cupid* conspicuously lack wings. Furthermore, operating in Galli's orbit, Galeazzo would undoubtedly have known the infamous story of Michelangelo's other contemporary masterpiece—the *Sleeping Cupid*—which had been deceitfully sold as an antiquity to Cardinal Raffaele Riario by the dealer Baldassare del Milanese. When the Cardinal discovered the forgery and returned it for his money back, Vasari aptly remarked that "the Cardinal … did not escape blame for not

251 Lewis 1989, 119.

252 Lewis 1987, 86-87.

253 We may note here Pomponius Gauricus's highly influential treatise *De Sculptura* (published in Florence in 1504) and discussed earlier in this book lists Prometheus as the very first sculptor.

254 Pope-Hennessy 1965, 51, no. 166. Pope-Hennessy describes the ornamental medallions held by the child in the *Prometheus / Sculptor* plaquette.

recognizing the merit of the work, for when the moderns equal the ancients in perfection it is a mere empty preference of a name to the reality when men prefer the works of the latter to those of the former, though such men are found in every age."[255] This sentiment aligns with Galeazzo's own philosophy of contemporary art equaling or surpassing the antique, something 'Moderno' may have intimated in this seal as an homage to Michelangelo's celebrity.

Galeazzo's mastery of the micro-scale was not limited to allegories; he also utilized the tiny seal format for a highly impressive miniature tondo featuring a *Riding Warrior* (identified as *Marcus Curtius*) (fig. 53a). This dynamic equestrian seal serves as a perfect conceptual bridge, demonstrating how Galeazzo translated the chaotic energy of monumental Roman reliefs into a miniature scale, and providing a direct segue into his larger, most ambitious narrative works: his magnificent battle and cavalry scenes.

Galeazzo's intense firsthand study of Roman antiquities—most notably the Trajanic Frieze on the Arch of Constantine and various Amazon sarcophagi—found its most ambitious expression in a series of highly charged, complex cavalry reliefs. Chief among these is his magnificent circular *Battle Scene* (fig. 55). This dynamic cavalry clash was originally conceived as a straightforward, independent relief, entirely devoid of any medallic legend.[256] The composition was so successful that it was later appropriated to serve as the obverse for the famous *Battle of Cannae* medal commemorating Gonzalo de Córdoba's victory.[257]

Fig. 55: Bronze plaquette of a *Battle Scene* by Galeazzo Mondella, probably 1508-09 (collection of Sandro Ubertazzi).

Galeazzo also adapted this original *Battle Scene* into a redacted rectangular format intended to decorate functional desktop luxury objects.[258] To accompany this rectangular variant Galeazzo may have generated a suite of complementary classical scenes, including a *Roman Triumph* (brilliantly inspired by the reverse of his earlier *Agostino Mazzanti* medal, see fig. 25) and a rare *Allegory of Victory*.[259]

255 For the anecdote regarding Cardinal Riario and Michelangelo's ***Cupid***, see Vasari 1568, Life of Michelangelo.

256 M. Riddick, "The Battle of Cannae Medal – A German-Italian Crossover?," ***Renbronze.com*** (2024b). Establishing that the ***Battle Scene*** was originally an independent, circular relief without an inscription.

257 Lewis 1989, 124. Lewis notes the medal appropriates Moderno's design. The evolution of this medal is further articulated by the present author in Riddick 2024b, although the present author's dating of Moderno's original invention and the Cannae Medal ought to be revised. The dating of the ***Battle of Cannae*** medal has historically been tied to the "Great Captain" Gonzalo de Córdoba's victory over the French at Cerignola in April 1503, leading earlier scholars to assume the medal was produced shortly after the battle. However, this early dating conflicts with the genesis of Moderno's original ***Battle Scene*** composition. Because Moderno's model relies heavily upon specific Roman antiquities—most notably the Great Trajanic Frieze on the Arch of Constantine—his invention of the relief must date to his Roman sojourn, beginning in 1508. The medallic appropriation of his design, complete with its added legend, must therefore post-date 1508. This adjusted timeline of c. 1508–1515 for the ***Cannae*** medal is entirely corroborated by the objects on which it appears. The medal forms the hilt of a sword belonging to Córdoba; while older literature presumed this weapon was a 1503 gift from Pope Alexander VI, recent scholarship has re-dated the sword to 1504–1515, recognizing it as a presentation from Pope Julius II and likely the work of a swordsmith in the Veneto. Furthermore, the ***Cannae*** medal was used to decorate the back cover of a copy of ***Philostratus*** bound for the bibliophile Jean Grolier; although the text was printed earlier, the binding itself was securely executed in Milan between 1510 and 1516. Thus, a dating of circa 1508–1515 for the ***Cannae*** medal reconciles Moderno's invention of the underlying model in Rome with the subsequent, unauthorized diffusion of the composition onto luxury goods in northern Italy.

258 Riddick 2025. Discussing the redaction of the ***Battle Scene*** for functional desktop caskets.

259 Ibid. For the pairing of the ***Roman Triumph*** and the ***Allegory of***

Fig. 56: Parcel-gilt silver inkwell with reliefs depicting *Coriolanus Leaving Rome* (after Moderno's *Roman Triumph*) and a *Coriolanus Fighting Under the Walls of Rome* (after Moderno's *Battle Scene*), possibly by Matteo del Nassaro (?) or a follower of Moderno, possibly 1512-13 (?) (Victoria & Albert Museum, inv. M.167-1921).

Fig. 57: A *Battle Scene*, shell cameo, ca. 1500, by Galeazzo Mondella or Matteo del Nassaro, ca. 1508-12 (Hermitage Museum, Inv. K-2129).

Interestingly, these specific desktop reliefs soon took on a life of their own. The rectangular *Battle Scene* and the *Roman Triumph* were subsequently appropriated and adapted by an anonymous artist dubbed by Seymour de' Ricci as the "Coriolanus Master," who converted Galeazzo's *Roman Triumph* into a scene of *Coriolanus Leaving Rome* for use on objects like an inkstand preserved at the Victoria & Albert Museum (fig. 56).[260] It is possible that the "Coriolanus Master" represents the early, independent work of Matteo del Nassaro or some other collaborator in Galeazzo's orbit while in Rome. When Galeazzo was forced to abruptly leave Rome for Verona in 1512 following his brother's death, Nassaro remained behind in the papal capital for a short while with Niccolò Avanzi.[261] Left with direct access to his master's physical matrices and design repertoire, the young Nassaro—or a possible unidentified assistant—perhaps utilized them as templates to fit a newly conceived, marketable narrative depicting the story of Coriolanus.[262]

This master-pupil dynamic also provides crucial context for the earliest hardstone carving associated with Galeazzo from this period: the so-called *Orléans Cameo* (fig. 57).[263] Carved in shell, this masterful cameo synthesizes the mounted warriors from the Trajanic Frieze and the fallen soldiers of Roman sarcophagi, serving as the master source for the central figures in both the *Battle Scene* composition (fig. 55) and a subsequent *Lion Hunt* plaquette (fig. 58).[264] While it is difficult

---

Victory (e.g., NGA 1957.14.270).

260 For the adaptation of the ***Roman Triumph*** into ***Coriolanus Leaving Rome***, see Riddick 2025. The V&A inkstand (inv. M.167-1921) features these truncated rectangular scenes.

261 Vasari 1568. Vasari links Nassaro's training to both Moderno and Avanzi. Archival letters confirm Nassaro was in Rome with Avanzi in the late summer of 1512.

262 Riddick 2025. Noting the likelihood that the "Coriolanus Master" represents the early work of Moderno's pupil, Matteo del Nassaro, working from his master's models.

263 S. Reinach, ***Pierres Gravées*** (Paris, 1895), 137, no. I.39 ter.

264 Lewis 1989, 124. Lewis identifies the ***Orléans Cameo*** as the common source for both the ***Battle of Cannae*** and the ***Lion Hunt*** tondi.

to definitively say whether Galeazzo or perhaps more probably, Nassaro, carved the cameo, it is nonetheless a likely product of this precise Roman period occupied within their shared glyptic environment. Notably, the cameo later surfaced in the historic French collection of the Duke of Orléans.[265] This 18th century French provenance suggests the possibility that the object was indeed physically transported across the Alps by Nassaro himself, who soon became a celebrated master at the court of Francis I.

The collaborative nature of Galeazzo's Roman workshop is further illuminated by the historiography of two other reliefs from this period: the previously noted *Lion Hunt* (fig. 58) and the *Dubia Fortuna* riding warrior scene (fig. 59). Scholars have long been divided on the definitive association of these works with Moderno, sensing a discrepancy in their execution despite their reliance on his overarching compositional frameworks. While Émile Molinier attributed the *Lion Hunt* to Moderno, Eric Maclagan later cautioned that the attribution "appears probable, though not certain."[266] The historiographical divide is even sharper concerning the *Dubia Fortuna* plaquette (which features elements from a Mantuan Amazon sarcophagus). Molinier, Maclagan, and Ulrich Middeldorf confidently attributed it to Moderno, whereas Ernst Bange and Leo Planiscig firmly rejected this, arguing it was the work of a younger imitator or follower.[267]

This scholarly division perfectly encapsulates the reality of the works: they are quite likely collaborative undertakings executed by Nassaro under Galeazzo's direct guidance. The ultimate

Fig. 58: Bronze tondo plaquette of a *Lion Hunt* by Galeazzo Mondella and/or Matteo del Nassaro (?), ca. 1508-1512 (Palazzo Madama, Turin, inv. 1100B).

Fig. 59: Bronze *Dvbia Fortvna* plaquette by Galeazzo Mondella and Matteo del Nassaro, ca. 1508-12 (private collection).

265 M. Riddick, "Glyptics, Italian Plaquettes in France and their Reproduction in Enamel," ***Renbronze.com*** (2019). Discussing the French provenance of the ***Orléans Cameo*** and its likely transport by Nassaro.

266 Maclagan 1924, 39. See also Molinier 1886, 1:155-156, no. 217.

267 Pope-Hennessy 1965, 56, no. 186. Summarizing the historiography: Molinier, Maclagan, and Middeldorf attributed the ***Dubia Fortuna*** to Moderno, while Bange 1922 (no. 514) and Planiscig gave it to an imitator.

proof of this partnership may lie in the *Dubia Fortuna* plaquette itself. The mysterious, isolated letters forming the end of the inscription have long puzzled art historians; Molinier and Lewis read the elided letters as a monogrammatic "M," serving as a workshop trademark for Moderno.[268] However, a closer inspection on particularly crisp casts of the legend in a private collection, at the Vienna Museum of Applied Arts (inv. BR 227) and Louvre (inv. OA 4027) reveal that the ligature can be read as an "NA" (fig. 59). Rather than a simple trademark, this isolated monogram may function as a co-signature (Moderno and Nassaro), permanently memorializing the collaborative genesis of these dynamic Roman reliefs before the two artists eventually departed the papal capital.

Galeazzo's Roman period is also exemplified by his magnificent, signed hardstone carving of *Apollo*, now preserved in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (fig. 60). This cameo brilliantly demonstrates his direct engagement with the most progressive monumental art of the papal capital. The carving faithfully reproduces the fictive marble statue of the lyre-playing god situated in the left-hand niche of Raphael's celebrated fresco, the *School of Athens*, located in the Stanza della Segnatura of the Vatican Palace.[269]

Scholars previously assumed that Galeazzo derived his composition second-hand, utilizing Marcantonio Raimondi's undated engraved copy of the figure as a model.[270] However, Lewis has persuasively argued that Galeazzo's carving bypasses the printed intermediary entirely. Lewis observes that the angle of Apollo's head in the

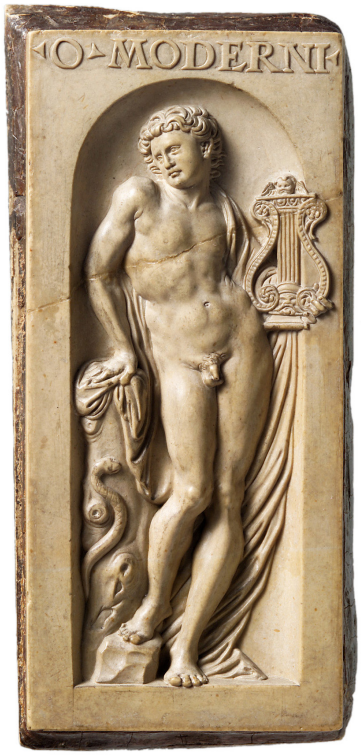

Fig. 60: Limestone carving of *Apollo* (after Raphael), mounted to wood, ca. 1511-13, by Galeazzo Mondella (called Moderno) (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer 4425)

cameo is decisively different from Raimondi's print, yet it is exactly congruent with Raphael's fresco itself.[271] This precise visual correspondence suggests that Galeazzo worked directly from a primary prototype drawing, very likely one executed by Raphael's own hand.[272]

Galeazzo's access to such an exclusive graphic source was entirely plausible within his elite Roman network. His primary patron during this period, Cardinal Domenico Grimani, possessed a substantial collection of Raphael's drawings, providing the perfect conduit for Galeazzo to study the master's designs firsthand.[273] Relying on this direct connection, Lewis confidently dates the

268 Lewis 1989, 124–126. See also Molinier 1886, 1:153–154, no. 215, who first inferred the letters possessed a double sense as the initial M.

269 Lewis 1989. Noting the hardstone *Apollo* (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna) and its direct visual reliance on Raphael's *School of Athens*.

270 Marcantonio Raimondi's engraving of the Apollo figure was long considered the likely intermediary for Moderno's composition in older scholarship.

271 Lewis 1989.

272 Ibid.

273 For Cardinal Domenico Grimani's collection of Raphael drawings and his patronage of Moderno, see the preceding discussion on the Grimani silver reliefs. Grimani's network securely places Moderno in the immediate orbit of Raphael's workshop.

execution of the hardstone *Apollo* to circa 1511–1513, immediately following the public unveiling of the *School of Athens* in 1511.[274] This masterful carving serves as a fitting coda to Galeazzo's Roman sojourn, epitomizing his unique ability to translate the monumental, classical vocabulary of the High Renaissance into the intimate, precious medium of glyptics.

Galeazzo's mastery of the micro-scale in Rome was not limited to papal seals and hardstones but also found expression in other works like his *Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl*, recognized as one of his most accomplished narrative compositions (fig. 61). Galeazzo situates the Raphael-esque figure group before a deeply recessed, Bramantesque architectural background.[275] The scene's columns, arranged *en ressault* before a festooned wall, become a leitmotif of Galeazzo's late style, reflecting his immersion in the progressive High Renaissance environment of Rome. In fact, the intricate *grotteschi* decorations adorning the wall share exact correspondences with ornamental prints produced by Nicoletto da Modena while he, too, was residing in Rome.[276]

The contextual meaning of the *Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl* plaquette is rooted in a profound Christian legend that bridged the classical Roman past with the triumph of the new faith. According to the legend, when the Roman Senate decreed the deification of the Emperor Augustus, he consulted the Tiburtine Sibyl to know whether he should accept the honor. In response, the Sibyl prophesied the coming of a child who would be greater than all the Roman gods, revealing to the Emperor

Fig. 61: Gilt bronze plaquette of *Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1508-12 (Palazzo Madama, Turin, inv. 1170B).

a miraculous celestial vision of the Virgin and Child appearing in the heavens.[277] In Galeazzo's highly concentrated circular design, he situated Augustus, the Sibyl, and the divine apparition on a single vertical axis within a richly decorated, *all'antica* courtyard, achieving a narrative acuity that greatly surpassed the more dispersed, rectangular treatments of the same subject by contemporaries like Caradosso.[278]

Regarding its physical function, Pope-Hennessy noted the plaquette may have been used to decorate functional desktop objects.[279] Furthermore, the object's form makes it plausible for use as a hat badge (or *enseigne*). During the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, fashionable Renaissance gentlemen frequently wore small, circular bronze plaquettes pinned off-center on their caps or on the upturned brims

274 Lewis 1989. Anchoring the *Apollo* to the brief window between the fresco's completion (1511) and Moderno's sudden departure from Rome (1512/13).

275 Pope-Hennessy 1965, 51. Pope-Hennessy specifically praises the "Raphaelesque" nature of the figure group, while the architecture firmly reflects the contemporary Roman environment of Bramante.

276 Lewis 1989, 129. Lewis anchors the plaquette to Rome c. 1507 based on the exact correspondences between Moderno's *grotteschi* and Nicoletto da Modena's 1507 prints.

277 The legend is most famously recounted in Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* (*Legenda Aurea*), which served as a standard theological sourcebook for Renaissance iconographic programs.

278 Lewis 1989. For a comparison between Moderno's highly condensed circular composition and Caradosso's dispersed rectangular treatment of the same subject.

279 Pope-Hennessy 1965, 51. Noting the physical evidence of these circular reliefs being embedded into functional desktop objects.

Fig. 62: Bronze tondo plaquette of a *Fall of Phaeton* by Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1508-1512 (British Museum, inv. OA.2357).

of their *barette*. While modern audiences often associate these classical bronze reliefs strictly with secular or mythological themes, studies of surviving Renaissance hat badges reveal that biblical and religious subjects outnumbered profane subjects two-to-one.[280] Given this cultural context, Galeazzo's *Augustus and the Tiburtine Sibyl* would have functioned brilliantly as a wearable cap badge. It offered the perfect duality for a Renaissance patron: a pious, devotional image that simultaneously projected the wearer's sophisticated humanist erudition through its classical Roman characters and intricate architectural setting.

Equally steeped in this antiquarian culture is Galeazzo's *Death of Hippolytus* (or *Fall of Phaeton*), a composition that Pope-Hennessy championed as perhaps the finest of all the artist's bronze plaquettes (fig. 62). This highly accomplished relief, with its dynamic arrangement of plunging horses and a tumbling protagonist—derived from a third-century Roman sarcophagus—likely served as a compositional cue for the earlier discussed *Lion Hunt* proposed executed by Galezzo and his pupil Matteo del Nassaro (fig. 58).

Furthermore, Galeazzo's masterful, antique-inspired motif proved remarkably resilient, as it appears to have directly inspired Michelangelo's later variations of the subject which the master explored in three highly finished presentation drawings given to his friend Tommaso de' Cavalieri in 1533. Cementing the design's enduring legacy across media, Michelangelo's celebrated composition was subsequently commissioned to be reproduced as a cut rock crystal by the gem-engraver Giovanni Bernardi, which itself became

280 For the prevalence of religious over profane subjects on Renaissance hat badges (***enseignes***), jewelry and attire, see Nicholas Penny, ***The Sixteenth-Century Italian Paintings, Volume I: Paintings from Bergamo, Brescia and Cremona*** (London: National Gallery Company, 2004), 154–157. For a comprehensive study of these wearable objects and their dual devotional and apotropaic functions, see also Yvonne Hackenbroch, ***Enseignes: Renaissance Hat Jewels*** (Florence: S.P.E.S., 1996).".

likewise translated into the medium of bronze plaquettes during the second quarter of the 16th century.

While explicit archival documentation physically placing Galeazzo in Rome has yet to be discovered, his residency in the papal capital is overwhelmingly corroborated by a confluence of literary, biographical, and stylistic evidence.[281] The mid-sixteenth-century accounts of Vasari and Holanda attest to his high reputation and his production of lead seals for the papacy, while the documented presence of his Veronese pupil, Nassaro, working in Rome by 1512 firmly anchors his immediate circle to the city.[282] Operating at the center of this highly competitive, international environment, Galeazzo's unique synthesis of his northern Italian micro-carving roots with a newly acquired Roman archaeological exactitude culminated in two spectacular, monumental silver reliefs: the *Flagellation* (fig. 63) and the *Sacra Conversazione* (*Virgin and Child with Saints*) (fig. 64). Acquired by the powerful Cardinal Domenico Grimani—a Venetian patriarch residing in Rome and one of the era's most voracious collectors of antiquities—these silver masterworks represent the zenith of Galeazzo's High Renaissance style.[283] Recent scholarship by Maria Teresa Franco compellingly suggests that the commission functioned as a dual family celebration, arguing that the profound themes of salvation and redemption in these specific reliefs were intimately tied to Domenico's father, Antonio Grimani, mirroring his dramatic political rehabilitation and return to Venice following his exile and the disastrous Battle of Agnadello in 1509.[284] They brilliantly harmonize the delicate, jewel-like precision Galeazzo perfected during his Lombard excursion with the muscular, volumetric grandeur of his intense Roman studies.

Yet, anchoring the creation of these silver masterworks to the years immediately following 1509 presents a daunting logistical puzzle. A skeptical assessment of this brief, four-year Roman window (1508–1512) might logically question how it was physically possible for one man to concurrently manage the papal *Piombo*, mentor an apprentice, study the newly discovered antiquities of the Belvedere Courtyard, and execute intricately complex masterworks like the Grimani silver reliefs. The resolution to this chronological bottleneck lies in recognizing that Galeazzo—just as he had previously demonstrated with his streamlined facture methods in Mantua—did not operate as a solitary craftsman laboring endlessly over a crucible. Instead, he functioned at the highest level of his profession as an executive designer and general contractor. As technical studies of Renaissance bronzes have shown, the medium naturally lent itself to a sophisticated division of labor; as a master sculptor's fame grew, his time was increasingly monopolized by the invention of primary wax or clay models, while the arduous tasks of mold-making, casting, and

281 Leino 2013, 28, note 48. Leino notes that while there is no direct documentary evidence of Mondella in Rome, his presence is heavily deduced from stylistic and secondary literary sources.

282 For Francisco de Holanda's 1549 mention of Moderno producing seals for the papal *Piombo*, see Lewis 1989 and Pope-Hennessy 1964. For Matteo del Nassaro's documented presence in Rome in 1512 alongside the Veronese gem-engraver Niccolò Avanzi, see Riddick 2024a.

283 The silver reliefs of the *Flagellation* and *Sacra Conversazione*, now housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, originally formed part of the elite collection of Cardinal Domenico Grimani in Rome.

284 Franco 2022. Franco advances the compelling hypothesis that the elderly male profile figure protected by the Virgin in the *Sacra Conversazione*—traditionally identified as Cardinal Domenico Grimani—may represent his father, Antonio Grimani. She notes that the overarching iconographic program of salvation and redemption aligns with Antonio's social and political rehabilitation in Venice after the 1509 defeat at Agnadello, transforming the reliefs into a proud claim of family honor and prestige.

Fig. 63 (facing page): Enlarged image of a parcel-gilt silver *Flagellation* by Galeazzo Mondella, called Moderno, ca. 1508-10 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer 1105).


OP MODERNI

Fig. 64: Parcel-gilt silver *Sacra Conversazione* by Galeazzo Mondella, called Moderno, ca. 1508-10 (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer 1107).

chasing were delegated to specialized subordinates or independent foundries.[285] This entrepreneurial strategy was essential for the most prolific bronze masters of the era to meet high market demand. Severo da Ravenna, for instance, maximized his workshop's output through sheer mechanical ingenuity, utilizing standardized geometric bases and threaded tangs to quickly assemble interchangeable cast parts.[286] Similarly, the immense popularity of Andrea Riccio's inventions in Padua necessitated the development of independent foundries and a wide circle of skilled craftsmen dedicated solely to reproducing his models.[287] Viewed through this lens, Galeazzo's official position at the *Piombo* did not drain his time; rather, it actively embedded him within a state-sponsored network of highly skilled metalworkers

285 Richard E. Stone, "Italian Renaissance and Baroque Sculptors in Bronze," in ***Italian Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes in The Metropolitan Museum of Art***, ed. Denise Allen ***et al.*** (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2022), 27. Stone notes that the spread of indirect casting caused the manufacture of bronzes to "break up into a series of specialized crafts," allowing masters like Antico to delegate the actual casting of their models to independent goldsmith-sculptors.

286 For Severo da Ravenna's innovative use of interchangeable parts, threaded tangs, and standardized bases to maximize workshop production, see Stone 2022, 74 (cat. 39)

287 Ibid., 27. See also Peta Motture, "Riccio and the Bronze Statuette as an Art Form," in ***Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze***, ed. Denise Allen (New York: The Frick Collection, 2008), 64–67.

and *garzoni* whom he could readily subcontract. For colossal projects like the Grimani reliefs, Galeazzo undoubtedly provided the brilliant compositional wax matrices, but relied on this collaborative Roman apparatus to execute the heavy labor. Furthermore, it is possible that the initial conceptual phases and structural armatures for these complex works were begun earlier during his travels in the Veneto or Lombardy, leaving only their final localized execution and assembly to his intense Roman sojourn.

Before analyzing Galeazzo's ultimate Roman-Venetian triumphs, it is essential to contextualize the philosophical framework that governed the elite reception of his work in the Veneto. The patrician and humanist circles of Venice and Padua were steeped in a Neoplatonic worldview that actively sought to reconcile the pagan past with Christian revelation. Within this intellectual climate, the integration of classical motifs into devotional art was not viewed as a profane contradiction, but rather as an *interpretatio christiana*—a deliberate syncretism where antiquity served as a noble, prophetic precursor to Christian truth.[288]

Galeazzo's ability to cater to this sophisticated theological taste is evident in how he systematically Christianized his classical borrowings. As earlier discussed, this is vividly illustrated in his celebrated *Entombment* plaquette (fig. 69). While relying on a Mantegnesque sculptural prototype for the composition, Galeazzo boldly reimagined the fictive antique sarcophagus at the center of the scene. Replacing the pagan motif of the Abduction of Persephone found on his source, Galeazzo substituted a microscopic, continuous narrative of Saint Helen and the Proving of the True Cross. By integrating this specific legend, he transformed the classical sarcophagus into an emblematic "Triumph over Death," conceptually linking the wood of the cross to the redemption of mankind.[289] Similarly, Galeazzo frequently employed scenes of pagan animal sacrifice, such as those featured on the throne base of his *Sacra Conversazione* (fig. 64). For Renaissance theologians and artists, these ancient rites were utilized to prefigure the Eucharist, visually articulating the belief that the rituals of the Old Law were necessary steppingstones to Christ's ultimate sacrifice.[290]

This conceptual layering extended beyond narrative iconography into a profound "material theology," where the physical substances depicted—and the actual metals used—carried intrinsic redemptive power. A striking example of this is Galeazzo's earlier discussed inclusion of coralline imagery in his depictions of noble sacrifice.

The actual metallic materials of Galeazzo's matrices participated equally in this theological discourse. Following Leon Battista Alberti's influential architectural treatise, which reinstated bronze for Christian statuary due to its "durability" and its capacity to convey "the grace and majesty of a god," the copper alloy was championed as a material capable of capturing a permanent, divine imprint.[291] Furthermore, when Galeazzo's matrices were cast in precious metals—such as the silver and gold utilized for his most elite Venetian commissions—they tapped into a longstanding medieval and Renaissance theology of luminosity. Gleaming silver and gold were believed to reflect the divine light of Heaven, functioning as spiritual conductors that could transport the faithful observer from the material world to the immaterial

288 For the *interpretatio christiana* and the synthesis of pagan and Christian thought in the Renaissance, see A. Warburg, *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity* (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 1999); and A. Nagel, *The Controversy of Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 169–173.

289 Lewis 1989, 120–121. Lewis notes that the Cross appears not only on the sarcophagus but also on the road to Calvary in the middle ground, making the entire composition an emblematic allegory.

290 F. Saxl, "Pagan Sacrifice in the Italian Renaissance," *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 2, no. 4 (1939): 346–367.

291 L. B. Alberti, *De re aedificatoria* (first published 1485), Book VII, 17. As discussed in *The Bronze Object in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, bronze was validated by the Church for religious statuary precisely for its enduring properties.

in an anagogical manner.[292] This brilliant synthesis of antique form, redemptive iconography, and luminous material set the perfect intellectual stage for his reception by the most erudite collectors of the Serenissima.

In the *Flagellation*, Galeazzo orchestrated a masterclass of dynamic tension and anatomical perfection (fig. 63). The beautifully chased, muscular tormentors inflicting punishment upon Christ clearly reflect his firsthand study of monumental Hellenistic statuary, alongside the profound anatomical tension of Leonardo's recent *Battle of Anghiari* studies.[293] At the center of this maelstrom, as noted earlier, Christ's twisting, agonized volume owes a direct debt to the *Laocoön*, seamlessly translating the monumental energy of the papal capital into a highly refined, precious metal relief.[294]

The companion *Sacra Conversazione* is an equally breathtaking display of sophistication (fig. 64, and facing page), though here Galeazzo abandons the deeply recessed, Bramantesque architecture of the *Flagellation* in favor of a magnificent, flat, ornamented backdrop. He infused this composition with direct, micro-scaled quotations of his Roman environment. The flickering, delicate ornamentation adorning the wall reflects a profound understanding of ancient Roman *grotteschi*, directly inspired by the ongoing excavations of Nero's Golden House (*Domus Aurea*). Even more astonishingly, Galeazzo included tiny, recognizable figures of the colossal Roman 'Horse Tamers' (the *Dioscuri*) from the Quirinal Hill, seamlessly integrating them into the background architecture as an homage to the city's antique heritage.

While the *Sacra Conversazione* is deeply indebted to the architectural and archaeological environment of Rome, Galeazzo also relied heavily on visual memories collected during his earlier excursion to Milan. As earlier discussed, Attilio Troncavini has noted that the distinctive posture of the nude Saint Sebastian on the right side of the composition—with his hands bound tightly behind his back—as virtually identical to the figures of Joseph's captive brothers depicted on the *Capsella di San Nazaro* in Milan (fig. 39).[295] Galeazzo's firsthand study of this venerable silver artifact explains his ability to retrieve and seamlessly integrate its Late Antique figural typologies into his own monumental silver masterpiece years later.[296]

The Grimani commission represents the pinnacle of Galeazzo's career, bridging his established prestige among the Venetian patriciate with the monumental, antiquarian grandeur of papal Rome. When the sudden death of his brother forced him to abruptly abandon the city in 1512, his Roman triumphs were not left behind. As he resettled into his Veronese workshop, he returned not as a retreating artisan, but as a master of unparalleled renown. The elite endorsement of Cardinal Grimani cemented a legacy that transcended the Italian peninsula, setting the stage for the final, international chapter of his career—a phase that would soon see him reunite with his gifted pupil, Matteo del Nassaro, who would ultimately carry his celebrated models across the Alps to the royal court of France.

A testament to the celebration of Galeazzo's models is observed in the extraordinary longevity and valuation given them. His original matrices continued to circulate in the papal capital even after his abrupt departure, and well beyond his

292 For the theological perception of precious metals and gems as spiritual conductors (a concept formalized by Abbot Suger and inherited by the Renaissance), see Belozerskaya 2005, 51.

293 Franco 2022.

294 Moderno's integration of the volumetric, muscular tension found in newly excavated antiquities like the *Laocoön* marked a definitive shift from the more calligraphic, linear style of his earlier northern period.

295 Troncavini 2018. Troncavini identifies the exact parallel between Moderno's saints and the depiction of Joseph's brothers on Side C of the Milanese reliquary.

296 Troncavini 2018; Slavazzi 2009.

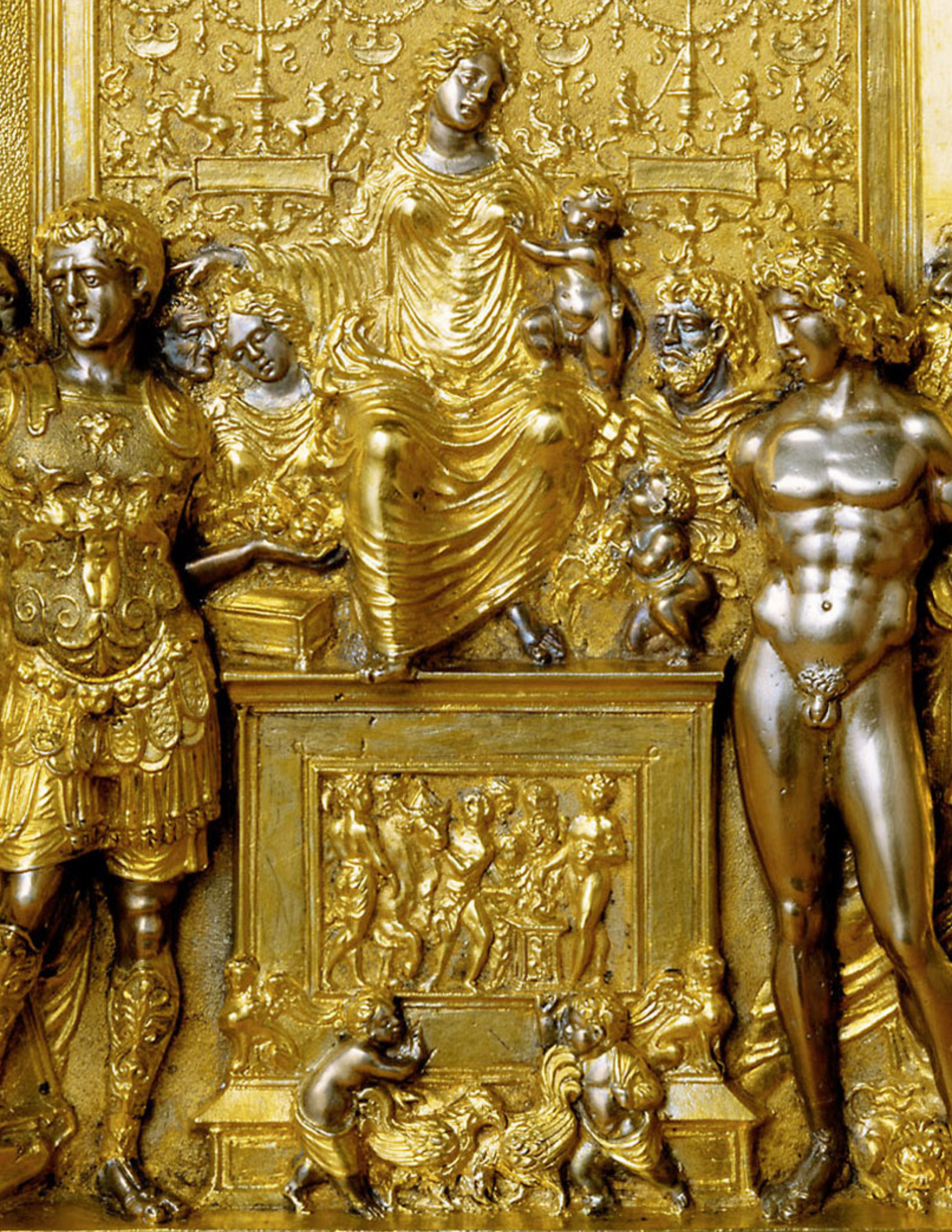

Fig. 65 (and facing page): Oil-on-panel portrait of Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, by Hans Eworth, 1562 (Arundel Castle, UK).

eventual death. Archival evidence confirms that his wax models were highly prized commodities exchanged among the most elite jewelers and merchants.[297] A Roman notarial document from March 12, 1522, records a transaction between the Venetian gem merchant Simplicio Rizzo and the diamond cutter Francesco de' Benedetti, detailing the commission of a diamond-encrusted gold and enameled hat badge (*ensegna*) or diamond brooch. The document specifies that the central relief of Saint George on horseback slaying the dragon was to be executed "according to the form and model of wax made by the hand of Moderno" (*secondo la forma et modello de cera fatto per man del Moderno*). Tellingly, the adjudicators overseeing the quality of this work included the celebrated Milanese goldsmith Caradosso Foppa and the Florentine Raffaello d'Andrea, situating Galeazzo's model at the center of high-Renaissance jewelry production.[298]

The reverence for this specific wax model extended well into the latter half of the sixteenth century and across the Alps. A spectacular, previously unrecognized visual record of this exact model survives in Hans Eworth's 1562 portrait of Thomas Howard, 4th Duke of Norfolk, deriving from Galeazzo's successful *Battle Scene* motif (fig. 55) with the addition of a dragon in the lower right margin of the scene (fig. 65, facing page).[299] Suspended from the Duke's neck is an elaborate enameled gold pendant featuring Galeazzo's composition which closely reproduces the spatial dynamics and figural types of his recognizable plaquette designs. The presence of Galeazzo's model in an elite Tudor portrait painted thirty-four years after the artist's death proves that his original wax matrices were not ephemeral workshop tools, but were deliberately curated, traded, and utilized as high-value intellectual assets by the most prominent jewelers of the European Renaissance.

297 Brown 1997, 65–71.

298 For the 1522 notarial act (*Archivio Storico Capitolino, Archivio notarile "Urbano,"* vol. 164, cc. 225v–227r) and the roles of Rizzo, Benedetti, Foppa, and d'Andrea, see Brown 1997, 66–68.

299 For a long while art historians have mistakenly associated this specific *Saint George* composition with a work by the Paduan master Andrea Riccio (or his shop).


SOLA VIRTVS

VIII.

THE PATRIARCH'S LEGACY

Required to abandon his Roman workshop, his pupil Nassaro, and his lucrative proximity to the Curia, Galeazzo returned to the Veneto to save and manage his late brother's *apotheca* in the San Salvaro neighborhood, while resuming residence at his own established home in nearby Santa Maria in Organo.[300] The abrupt departure from Rome in 1512, precipitated by the plague and family tragedy, did not spell the end of his career, but rather initiated a mature phase characterized by intense civic involvement in Verona, strategic travels to Milan, and the ultimate international diffusion of his masterworks.

While Galeazzo reestablished his Veronese base, documentary and physical evidence suggests he soon made a brief sojourn to Milan to reunite with his gifted pupil, Matteo del Nassaro. Galeazzo's presumed presence in Milan closely overlaps with the documented activity of his pupil in that city where a 1514 commission from Isabella d'Este —sending a precious topaz to 'a certain Matteo, cutter of carnelian'—securely places him.[301]

Galeazzo's proposed return to Milan is anchored by a magnificent silver *Pietà* pax, today in the Mantua Diocesan Museum, which bears the inscribed date of 1513 (fig. 66).[302] Featuring a partially gilt silver relief of his famous *Pietà*, the object serves as a *terminus ante quem* for the composition, though the specific circumstances of its commission remain debated. Luigi Bosio posited that the pax may have been commissioned by Cardinal Sigismondo Gonzaga, who was appointed as the perpetual administrator of the Mantua Cathedral in 1511.[303] Alternatively, Paola Venturelli argues the object was conceived as a diplomatic or marriage gift intimately linked to the court of Isabella d'Este and Federico II Gonzaga.[304]

Regardless of its exact patronage, the physical construction of the 1513 pax illustrates the sophisticated administrative model Galeazzo had just solidified in Rome. Just as he had likely orchestrated teams of specialized assistants to execute complex masterworks like the Grimani reliefs, here Galeazzo acted as a designer-entrepreneur, leveraging the highly collaborative workshop environment of Milan. As Venturelli has acutely observed, the architectural frame of the pax—with its fluted columns, Corinthian capitals, and elaborate mother-of-pearl inlay—belongs intrinsically to the decorative vocabulary of Lombardy, echoing the facades of the Colleoni Chapel in Bergamo and the Certosa di Pavia.[305] This suggests that Galeazzo supplied the highly portable, precious silver relief, while the actual assembly and creation of the ornate frame and its components were outsourced to localized Lombard specialists operating within the Sforza milieu.

It is also important to note that the Mantua pax, as it appears today, is not entirely indicative of its original splendor. A 1554 cathedral inventory describes the object as originally beset with pearls that are now missing. Furthermore, recent restorations and technical analyses by Lucia Miazzo have revealed that the cross surmounting the pediment and the winged mount securing the topmost bust (traditionally identified as white coral, but which Miazzo asserts is ivory) are later

300 For the precise locations of the Mondella residences and workshops, drawn from Veronese tax registries (*estimi*) and guild records, see Rognini 1975, 95-119. Rognini establishes that following the 1496 division of the family firm in San Benedetto, Girolamo operated in San Vitale and subsequently San Salvaro, while Galeazzo maintained a perpetual lease on a home in Santa Maria in Organo.

301 A. Bertolotti, *Le arti minori alla corte di Mantova* (Milano, 1889), 59.

302 Venturelli 2012.

303 L. Bosio, "Tesori d'arte nella terra dei Gonzaga," in *Catalogo della mostra* (Mantua, 1974), 95-96, no. 116.

304 Venturelli 2012.

305 Ibid. The specific typologies of the columns and capitals point decisively to Lombard craftsmen assembling the final object around Moderno's silver cast.

Fig. 66: Parcel-gilt silver applique of the *Pietà* by Galeazzo Mondella, set in an enamel, coral, and *niello* mother-of-pearl pax frame, 1513 (Mantova, Museo Diocesano Francesco Gonzaga).

additions, while portions of the upper mother-of-pearl body have been lost. The reverse of the pax has also been modified, losing its original gilt-silver double-volute handle.[306]

Interestingly, the cathedral inventories from 1529, 1537, and 1538 repeatedly mention a *second* mother-of-pearl pax whose description closely mirrors the 1513 *Pietà*, but which instead featured an image of the Madonna.[307] This now-lost object implies that the *Pietà* pax originally had a pendant counterpart, likely intended to separate the devotions of the male and female sides of the congregation.

This alternate Madonna pax may represent another of Galeazzo's most successful, yet convoluted, inventions: the *Virgin and Child* (often cataloged as the *Holy Family with Saints*) (fig. 67). Because its compositional sources postdate 1508, the inception of this relief must be firmly related to his post-Roman return to Milan around 1513.[308] The composition demonstrates a profound, immediate absorption of the local aesthetic climate during this mature phase. As Ulrich Middeldorf first observed, the central grouping of the Virgin offering her breast to the Christ Child relates directly to a Leonardesque pictorial composition known in two painted versions of the *Madonna del latte* by Marco d'Oggiono or Giampietrino (Giovan Pietro Rizzoli) (fig. 68).[309] Because

Fig. 67: Bronze pax of the *Virgin and Child* (and a donor?) by Galeazzo Mondella and/or Matteo del Nassaro, ca. 1513 (British Museum, inv. 1915,1216.44).

Giampietrino's documented activity in Milan spans from 1508 to 1549, Galeazzo's borrowing of this specific motif aligns with his probable presence in the Sforza capital around 1513. Anchoring the relief to this later window not only resolves its Leonardesque origins but also logically explains its contemporaneous pairing with the dated 1513 *Pietà* pax for the Mantuan court.

Despite this clear Milanese genesis, the *Virgin and Child* presents one of the most challenging iconographic puzzles in Galeazzo's *oeuvre*. The sheer complexity and inconsistency of the surviving variants likely prompted Lewis to completely omit the work from his authoritative 1989 census of Moderno's accepted and rejected

306 For the 1554 inventory mentioning the pearls, see R. Putelli, ***Vita, storia, vol. II*** (1934–35), 50. For the physical alterations and missing handle, see L. Miazzo, "Il restauro della Pace del Moderno, 1513 (?)," in ***Restituzioni 2013*** (Turin, 2013); and Riddick 2020.

307 Venturelli 2012; Riddick 2020. The 1529 inventory originally listed a mother-of-pearl pax with the Madonna, which was crossed out and replaced by a ***Pietà***, but later 1530s inventories list both paxes, suggesting a pendant pair.

308 Giovan Pietro Rizzoli, known as Giampietrino, was a prominent exponent of the Lombard school and a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci. His documented activity in Milan spans from 1508 to 1549. For the dating of his career and the indisputable compositional relationship between his ***Madonna del latte*** (surviving in versions at the Galleria Borghese and Galleria Pallavicini in Rome).

309 Warren 2014, 851, no. 305. Warren notes Middeldorf's observation connecting the composition to the Giampietrino paintings, specifically citing the version in the Galleria Borghese (inv. 456); see also Middeldorf 1944, 42, no. 303.

attributions.[310] Lewis undoubtedly struggled to reconcile the relief's heavy Leonardesque influence—specifically its direct relationship to paintings by Leonardo's Milanese pupil, Giampetrino—with Galeazzo's typically classicizing, Mantuan-derived trajectory, and was likely deterred by the overwhelming quantity of corrupted casts.

A granular analysis of the surviving examples reveal that only the central, high-relief Virgin and Child and the triangular tympanum featuring God the Father blessing belong securely to Galeazzo's invention, possibly also with the intervention of his pupil, Nassaro.[311] Almost all other elements found on the various versions of this pax are the product of later hands. For instance, the ten haloed saints frequently found incised into the flat background of the pax, as well as the versions featuring two flanking saints executed in relief (such as the cast in Écouen), are decidedly later additions. However, the male supplicant standing in the background to the Virgin's right—often holding a cross on an orb and sometimes identified as Saint Joseph—may have been an original feature of the matrix. Wearing the vestments of a priest, this figure was almost certainly intended to represent a specific clerical patron or donor, as he appears integrally cast in several of the earliest known states.[312]

The popularity of this model paradoxically resulted in a dearth of prime, autograph casts. Unlike Galeazzo's mythological scenes, which were carefully controlled and retained their crispness, the *Virgin and Child* achieved such widespread devotional demand that it became the victim of rampant, debased serial copying. As Jeremy Warren has noted, it is exceedingly difficult to find early, high-quality casts of this relief; the vast majority of surviving examples appear to be secondary aftercasts produced throughout the mid-to-late sixteenth century and beyond.[313]

Despite this later degradation, the architectural framework surrounding the earliest paxes provides evidence of Galeazzo's localized activity. As with the 1513 *Pietà*, he likely furnished the central matrix, while secondary framing components—such as flanking pilasters adorned with intricate, Leonardesque knotwork—were supplied by local specialists. Distinctive frieze patterns found on these early frames reappear across several other plaquette variants from the period.[314] This shared ornamental vocabulary confirms the existence of a highly organized serial facture network operating in or around Milan, which was responsible for disseminating these objects—illicitly or otherwise—throughout Lombardy.

310 Lewis does not include this model in either his accepted or rejected lists in his foundational 1989 study.

311 Moderno's possible presence in Milan around this period remains hypothetical and it remains possible he provided materials to Nassaro in Milan from further afield in Verona.

312 Bange observed that many of the surviving versions, such as those in Berlin, are likely the work of mid- or later sixteenth-century artists working from Moderno's original model. Bange 1922, nos. 447-448, 61-62.

313 Warren 2014, 851, no. 305.

314 The sheer volume of surviving ***Virgin and Child*** casts demonstrates the extent to which the matrix was manipulated by later hands. For instance, versions featuring ten incised haloed saints in the background, or those with two flanking saints executed in relief (such as the cast in Écouen), are decidedly later additions. The model's popularity even extended to nineteenth-century Grand Tour pastiches, notably those featuring a Medici coat-of-arms along their lower frieze. Furthermore, the localized Milanese origins of the earliest pax frames can be traced via a distinct palmette and acanthus-leaf predella frieze. This specific pattern became a standardized workshop template in Lombardy, reappearing on a square variant of Moderno's ***Pietà*** plaquette, a variant of his ***Death of Hippolytus*** tondo, and numerous circular-bordered variants by other plaquette masters. The palmette also features on the altar plinth in Moderno's *Presentation of the Child Christ at the Temple* (fig. 22) and surmounting a pax with the *Crucifixion* (fig. 43).

Fig. 68 (facing page): Oil-on-panel painting of the *Madonna Breastfeeding the Child Christ* by Giampietrino, ca. 1508 (Galleria Borghese, inv. 456).

Another localized example of this possibly unauthorized serial market activity is noted in a variant *Virgin and Child* pax bearing the inscription FER . SIG . CANCVS (or FER . SIG . CA) along its upper architrave. While its exact meaning remains unresolved—Warren suggests it refers to a specific individual, presumably a "Ferdinando," perhaps holding the local title of Chancellor[315]—its presence on multiple, identically cast surviving paxes (such as those in Oxford and Berlin) is highly revealing.[316] Because this identical dedicatory inscription and its accompanying unidentified coat of arms are integrated directly into the standardized Lombard architectural frame across multiple debased copies, it proves that local founders were actively appropriating Galeazzo's central relief. They were systematically reusing his matrix to fulfill new, customized orders for regional officials, effectively stripping Galeazzo of his intellectual property to fuel a lucrative secondary market long after his own activity in the city had ceased.

This dynamic of Lombard production and wider regional diffusion is perfectly exemplified by another spectacular survival: an exquisite pax of Galeazzo's *Entombment* preserved in the parish church of San Giuliano in Bologna.[317] Despite its Bolognese location, the physical construction of the object points decisively to the same Lombard facture. The San Giuliano *Entombment* pax is a direct structural cognate of the 1513 *Pietà* pax currently in Mantua.[318] Both works share commensurate features that suggest they were assembled by the same hand or within the same Milanese workshop, notably the use of silhouetted reliefs and elaborate architectural frames are indebted to Lombard typologies.[319] How this luxury object reached Emilia-Romagna remains a matter of speculation, but a presumably enameled frieze along its entablature indicates it may have been specifically commissioned or donated to the Bolognese church, likely facilitated by an elite patronage network linking the two regions.

The echo of Galeazzo's aesthetic inventions remained firmly lodged in Lombardy. This enduring resonance is perhaps most evident in the prolonged regional influence of his *Entombment* composition (fig. 69). Lewis previously observed a relationship between Galeazzo's plaquette and a now-lost *Deposition* by the venerable Lombard master Vincenzo Foppa, suggesting a shared typology that permeated the Milanese environment.[320] The true extent of Galeazzo's localized impact, however, is vividly demonstrated by a recently identified early sixteenth-century painting of the *Deposition of Jesus in the Tomb* attributed to the workshop of Bartolomeo Suardi, called Bramantino (fig. 70).[321] The painting

315 Warren 2014, 851, no. 305. Warren notes the inscription on the Oxford pax and an identical version in Berlin (which also shares the same unidentified coat of arms), suggesting it refers to a specific patron named Ferdinando. The multiplication of this specific patron's customized frame across multiple casts highlights the organized nature of this secondary workshop production.

316 The Chancellors (*Cancellieri*) of the Duchy of Milan or the various bishoprics were highly powerful figures and would have been ample patrons of such works or copies.

317 Riddick 2020. For the discussion of the surviving silver *Entombment* pax in San Giuliano, Bologna, in the context of Moderno's original matrix.

318 Riddick 2020.

319 For the specific Lombard decorative typologies (such as the capitals and fluted columns) used on the Mantua pax, see Venturelli 2012. Riddick 2020 notes the structural and stylistic correlations between the Mantua and Bologna paxes, attributing their frames to the same Milanese workshop.

320 Lewis 1989, 117-118; and Riddick 2020, discussing the lost Foppa *Deposition* formerly in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

321 Riddick 2020. For the attribution of the painting to Bramantino

Fig. 70 (facing page): Painting of the *Deposition of Jesus in the Tomb,* attributed to Bramantino (Bartolomeo Suardi) and workshop, early 16th century (Numero 7 Antiquariato).

reproduces the specific, highly charged figures of the dead Christ and the mourning Virgin drawn directly from Galezzo's *Entombment* plaquette.[322] Because Bramantino was a central figure in Milanese art—eventually serving as ducal painter and architect to Francesco II Sforza—the adoption of Galeazzo's composition by his workshop proves that Galeazzo's highly portable bronze inventions had successfully infiltrated the highest tiers of the Sforza capital, leaving an indelible mark on Lombard painting long after the artist himself had departed.

As earlier noted, Galeazzo's presence in Milan overlaps with the documented activity of his pupil there. It was during this Milanese period (c. 1513–1515) that a significant link to the French royal court was forged. The intermediary was likely Jean Grolier de Servières, the famous bibliophile who served as Treasurer for King Louis XII and Francis I in Milan.[323] Grolier's family originally hailed from Verona, providing an immediate cultural kinship with both Galeazzo and Nassaro. Furthermore, Grolier was a passionate lover of music and poetry; this compellingly aligns with Nassaro, who was not only a gem-engraver but also a highly accomplished lutenist and singer.[324] Given these overlapping Veronese roots and musical affinities, it is highly probable that Nassaro (and possibly Galeazzo) interacted directly with Grolier in Milan, explaining how Grolier gained access to the master matrices for his leather book bindings, four of which reproduce the collaborative DVBIA FORTVNA

Fig. 71: Blind impression of the *DVBIA FORTVNA Riding Warrior* motif by Galeazzo Mondella and Matteo del Nassaro, ca. 1508-12, here applied as a polychrome leather stamped impression on a Milanese binding of *John Philoponus' 6th century Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* from the library of Jean Grolier, ca. 1510-16 (probably 1515-16) (Newberry Library, Chicago).

and his workshop, Riddick cites the expertise of Emilio Negro (2020), ***Deposition of Jesus in the Tomb***. The Bramantino workshop painting underscores the diffusion of this pictorial typology in Milan, likely facilitated by Foppa's Sforza patronage.

322 Riddick 2020. Noting that the painting reproduces the very similar figures of Christ and Mary in its composition when compared against Moderno's ***Entombment***.

323 Riddick 2024a.

324 Vasari, ***Le Vite*** (1568), Vol. 6, trans. G. de Vere (1913), 79-80. Vasari notes Nassaro's training under the musicians Marco Carrà and Tromboncino.

composition on their covers (fig. 71).[325]

Grolier's profound affinity for music and poetry not only bonded him with the lutenist-engraver Nassaro but also positions him as a highly plausible patron for another series of works emanating from Galeazzo's immediate orbit: the suite of six plaquettes traditionally assigned to the anonymous 'Master of the Orpheus and Arion Roundels.'[326] These circular bronze reliefs, which measure approximately 10.5 cm in diameter, utilize the exact same filleted border templates found on Galeazzo's autograph allegorical and Herculean tondi, firmly placing their physical production within the Mondella *apotheca*.[327] However, while their execution demonstrates Galeazzo's clear influence, their slightly more rigid, developing naturalism reveals the hand of an emerging pupil rather than the master himself. Given the specific subject matter—celebrating the triumphs of the ancient poet-musicians Orpheus and Arion—this suite perfectly aligns with Nassaro's dual identity as a visual artist and an accomplished musician (fig. 72).[328]

Operating in the culturally vibrant milieu of Milan, Grolier, who actively maintained camaraderie with musicians such as the Veronese Franchino Gaffuri, represents the ideal humanist audience for these specific musical iconographies.[329] Whether directly commissioned by Grolier or another member of his elite circle, the enduring impact of these poetic subjects on Nassaro is confirmed by his later career in France. The artist would reprise the theme of Orpheus in monumental tapestry designs commissioned for King Francis I, which Nassaro notably traveled to Brussels to oversee in 1536.[330] By recognizing the young Nassaro as the highly compelling candidate for the Master of the Orpheus and Arion Roundels, we not only resolve another lingering pseudonymous identity within Moderno's shop but also trace a direct thematic lineage from his early Italian inventions to his subsequent French royal commissions.

325 See for example a 1504 Venetian edition of John Philoponus' 6th century ***Commentary on Aristotle's Posterior Analytics*** (Newberry Library, Chicago); a 1501-1504 edition of Flavius Philostratus' ***De Vita Apollonii Tyannei Libri Octo*** (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris); a 1504 edition of Joannes Grammaticus' ***In Posteria Resolutoria Aristotelis Commentaria*** (during the 1980s in the private library of Louis H. Silver); and a 1503 edition of ***Commentariolo in Olynthiacas Uplianus, Philippicasque Demosthenis Orationes*** (Biblioteca Nazionale Braidense, Mailand). See Anthony Hobson (1989): ***Humanists and Bookbinders: The origins and diffusion of the humanistic bookbinding 1459–1559, with a census of historiated plaquette and medallion bindings of the Renaissance***. Cambridge and Gustva Beck, Norditalienische Plaketteneinbände der 1. Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts und ihr Bezug zu Grolier. PhD thesis, Universität Hamburg, Germany (1984).

326 For the traditional attribution to this anonymous master, see Lewis 1989, 140-141.

327 Riddick 2024a. Another work often associated with this anonymous master is the ***Death of Lucretia***, which must also be the work of Nassaro (the figure of Lucretia precisely borrows Liberale da Verona's figure of Dido from a cassone, c. 1500, depicting the ***Suicide of Dido*** at the National Gallery, London, a notable feature as Moderno was close to Liberale during this period, eventually serving as a witness to that artist's will). Nassaro recycles the upper body of Lucretia for his figure of Eurydice in his ***Orpheus Losing Eurydice*** tondo. A unique plaquette in Mario Scaglia's collection (Rossi 2011, no. V.45), depicting a ***Seated Mars with Trophies,*** appears inspired by Moderno's masterful ***Mars*** plaquette and could reproduce a hardstone carving executed by Nassaro. A related variation of the subject, possibly also after a work by Nassaro is in the NGA (inv. 1957.14.541). One art market hardstone carving formerly in the Rothschild collection, a circular sardonyx cameo of a mounted horseman, is quite probably Nassaro's mature workmanship (Christie's auction, 12 Oct 2023, Lot 117). It features a gilt and enameled setting as its reverse with the inscription: CELVM. ET TERRAM. A related sardonyx inspired by the DVBIA FORTVNA composition appears as a hat badge on a painted portrait of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, c. 1564–1565, attributed to the Flemish artist Steven van der Meulen. We may also wonder if plaquettes depicting portrait busts of Paris (Ashmolean, inv. wa 1897.cdef.b865) and Hélène (Louvre, inv. OA 7345) might reproduce cameos executed by Nassaro, perhaps while he was still in Milan, post-1515. The bust of Paris appears on the façade of the Parisan hotel, Lallemant de Bourges, which underwent renovations during the early 16th century.

328 Ibid. The thematic focus on the triumph of music suggests the hand of an artist personally invested in the musical arts, a profile perfectly matching Vasari's description of Nassaro.

329 Franchino Gaffurio Laudensis (1518): …***De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum opus…***Gotardum Pontanum.

330 In 1536, Matteo del Nassaro traveled to Brussels to oversee the production of two large tapestries he designed for Francis I, based on the stories of Actaeon and Orpheus. Though now lost, they are cited in the French royal collection inventories of 1551. See Sophie Schneebalg-Perelman, "Richesses du Garde-Meuble Parisien de François Ier: inventaires inédits de 1542 et 1551," ***Gazette des Beaux-Arts*** (1971).

Fig. 72: Bronze plaquette tondi of *Orpheus Playing to the Animals and Trees* (above) (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1942.9.248) and *Orpheus Descending into Hades* (below) (Palazzo Madama, inv. 1173) by Matteo del Nassaro, ca. 1515-17.

While it is widely accepted that Nassaro entered the service of King Francis I shortly after the 1515 Battle of Marignano, recent scholarship has clarified that he likely operated in this capacity from Milan during his first few years of service. His earliest documented appearance in French royal records does not occur until 1518, when he is cited for a series of tapestry sketches based on Virgil's *Bucolics*.[331] This 1518 milestone marks the precise moment we believe Nassaro crossed the Alps to France. Galeazzo had successfully imparted to his pupil not only his microscopic technical brilliance but also the sharp marketing prowess and entrepreneurial spirit that would soon allow Nassaro to dominate the patronage of the French nobility.[332] Acting as the ultimate ambassador for his master, Nassaro brought Galeazzo's matrices with him, explaining the sudden appearance of Galeazzo's *Hercules* compositions carved as monumental stone reliefs on the façade of Francis I's lodges at the Château de Blois precisely around 1519 (fig. 74).[333]

Galeazzo's primary residence remained Verona, where he is officially recorded in the *estimo* of 1515.[334] His return from Milan to Verona coincided with the close of Imperial domination and the restoration of Venetian rule. On August 20, 1517, Galeazzo was elected to the *Cinquanta*—the very first city council formed under the restored Venetian authority.[335] The fact that he was one of the few "new faces" elected to this post-war council, and the only goldsmith, demonstrates his immense social standing. In the following year (1518), he was simultaneously elected to serve as the vicar of Lazise.[336] By February 10, 1519, archival records show he was at the podestà's tribunal in Verona dealing with a dispute over travel and hospitality expenses related to his work compiling the tax registries for the municipalities of Peri and Ossenigo.[337]

His civic reliability was matched by his profound dedication to his family, painting a portrait of an artist now fully assuming the mantle of a responsible patriarch. Around 1517, documents show Galeazzo actively assisting with legal matters and the care of the children of his deceased brother, Lancillotto.[338]

Despite these duties, his artistic judgment remained highly sought after. Galeazzo was called upon to evaluate the pricing and quality of the cloister capitals carved by the sculptor Francesco da Porlezza—who was tied to the Mondella family through marriage—for Galeazzo's own parish church of Santa Maria in Organo. Fascinatingly, the idiosyncratic capitals Porlezza carved were exact replicas of the designs Galeazzo had previously invented and featured in the fictive architecture of his own early and celebrated 1490 *Madonna and Child with Saints Anthony Abbot and Jerome* pax (fig. 1).[339] Overseeing this project allowed the aging master the rare joy of seeing his miniature, fantasy architectural vision brought to life in monumental stone.

While the archival records of the Mondella family confirm that Galeazzo's brothers entered into formal patrician marriages—Girolamo to Lucrezia,

331 For Nassaro's 1518 documented activity in France regarding the *Bucolics* tapestries, see M. Sauvage, *Matteo del Nassaro: un artiste véronais polyvalent à la cour de François Ier* (Masters Thesis, Université de Liège, 2019), 21-22; and Riddick 2024a.

332 Ibid.

333 Lewis 1989, 140, n. 192. See also Riddick 2019.

334 Estimo 261 (reg. 261, c. 212v).

335 ASVr, Antico Archivio del Comune, reg. 71, c. 41.

336 Ibid.

337 Archivio di Stato di Verona (ASVr), Atti dei Rettori Veneti (ARV), b. 31, fasc. *Actorum tertius*. See also Chiappa 2016, note 26 and p. 122.

338 Rognini 1975, 95-119. Galeazzo's assistance to the children of his late brother Lancillotto demonstrates his assumption of the role of family patriarch during these years.

339 For Moderno's consultation regarding the cloister capitals by Francesco da Porlezza at Santa Maria in Organo, and the visual correspondence of these capitals to the fictive architecture in Moderno's *Sacra Conversazione* plaquette, see Lewis 1989, 115, n. 108.

and Antonio Donato to Lucia—Galeazzo appears to have chosen a different domestic path. In 1506, his resident housekeeper gave birth to his son, Giambattista.[340] While a modern reading of this arrangement might initially cast the artisan as somewhat callous, contextualizing his household within Renaissance norms reveals a much deeper, stabilizing bond.

Employing a housekeeper was, in itself, a clear marker of Galeazzo's financial success and respectable social standing as an independent master in Verona. More importantly, this domestic partnership provided the vital stability that fueled his mobile career. When Galeazzo departed for his intensive Roman sojourn around 1508, he was able to do so precisely because he was leaving his home, his *bottega*, and his infant son in the trusted care of his child's mother. In practice, she functioned as a common-law wife, managing the domestic and logistical realities of the Verona workshop while the master expanded his visual vocabulary and his brand in the papal capital.

The true depth of his commitment to this family unit was ultimately codified on May 5, 1528.[341] On his deathbed in his home in the *contrada* of Santa Maria in Organo, Galeazzo did not yield his estate to the goldsmiths' guild or his extended legitimate relatives. Instead, he explicitly named his housekeeper and their son, Giambattista, as the beneficiaries of his will. While fathering a natural child with a domestic servant was a common occurrence across all strata of Renaissance society, Galeazzo's final testament served to officially legitimize their lifelong bond. By acknowledging them so prominently, he ensured that the woman who had anchored his household would be cared for, and that his son would rightfully inherit the lucrative bronze matrices of the "Moderno" enterprise.[342]

In his twilight years, Galeazzo continued to satisfy the high-end local market, producing a magnificent silver version of his *Pietà* pax proudly inscribed for a local patron: HOC • OP[VS]... B[ER]NARDIN • SENIOR • VERONE[NSIS]... 1521.[343] His ambitions, however, extended far beyond the miniature. On November 6, 1524, he signed a contract with the earlier discussed humanist Torello Sarayna (then acting head of the Society of the Conception) to provide four statues carved in local tufa (*de gollo*) representing Saints James, John, Catherine, and Lucy, along with two marble roundels of the *Madonna della Misericordia* for the church of San Fermo in Verona.[344] This remarkable document definitively proves that the undisputed master of the miniature bronze also worked in monumental stone formats late in life. Galeazzo's ability to effortlessly traverse the boundaries of scale marks him as a true Renaissance man. As scholars such as John Pope-Hennessy have noted, the Renaissance creative process for small reliefs and monumental sculpture was essentially identical; the sheer complexity of miniature works required them to be initially conceived on a grand scale before being intellectually and physically compressed.[345] Galeazzo's capacity to

340 For the birth of his son Giambattista Mondella (1506–c. 1572), who would follow his father's profession as a fine metalworker, see Lewis 1989, 131.

341 For Galeazzo's will dated May 5, 1528, see Rognini 1975, 103; and Barbieri 2012, 25-58.

342 For Giambattista's inheritance of the family shop and his subsequent business partnership with his nephews (formed on November 18, 1528), see Lewis 1989, 131; and Barbieri 2012, 25-58.

343 M. Lopato, ***Western European Plaquettes, XV-XVII Centuries, in the Hermitage Collections*** (Leningrad, 1976), 20-21. The full inscription on the 1521 silver ***Pietà*** pax (now in the Hermitage Museum) reads: hoc • op[vs] • F • F • pr[o. . .] • F • B[ER]NARDIN • SENIOR • VERoNE[NSIS] * EX SVIS HELE[. . .]OSINIS • 1521. This reveals that a "Frater Bernardin[us] Senior" (Brother Bernardino the Elder, of Verona) had the work made out of his own alms (***ex suis eleemosynis***). Given that Moderno's own parish church, Santa Maria in Organo, was an Olivetan Benedictine monastery, it is highly probable that the patron was a senior monk residing there, placing this commission squarely within the artist's immediate neighborhood and spiritual network.

344 Chiappa 2016, 117-118. The contract stipulated 25 ducats for the entirety of the project, with an advance of 2 ducats.

345 For a discussion of the relationship between monumental sculpture and the compressed scale of plaquettes, see J. Pope-Hennessy 1964, 63-85.

carve large statuary explains the "minutely scaled monumentality" so frequently praised in his plaquettes.[346] Because he possessed a profound, tactile understanding of how to build monumental forms, balance solid and void, and articulate muscular tension in large-scale stone, he was able to inject that exact same monumental energy into a wax matrix no larger than the palm of a hand. Sadly, these large-scale stone sculptures for San Fermo appear to have been lost to time, leaving his indestructible bronze multiples as the primary, enduring testament to his genius.

On May 5, 1528, Galeazzo Mondella dictated his last will and testament, and he likely died shortly thereafter.[347] However, his prolific output of matrices did not die with him. On November 18, 1528, his son, Giambattista, formed a formal nine-year mercantile society with his Brescian cousins (the sons of Antonio Donato) to continue trading in jewels, gold, and silver.[348]

Having witnessed his father harness the power of the bronze multiple, Giambattista was quick to adapt this serial strategy to new mediums. Recognizing the lucrative potential of the printed image, he became actively involved in the print world, occasionally acting as a print publisher (as evidenced by his *excudebat* on works such as Giovanni Battista Fontana's *Way to Calvary*).[349]

However, the Mondella mercantile society

Fig. 73: Bronze inkstand for a member of the Marcello family in Venice-Padua, with bound satyrs and three labors of Hercules (after Moderno), workshop of Desiderio da Firenze (?), ca. 1530/40 (National Gallery of Art, DC, inv. 1942.9.140).

346 Lewis 1989, 125. Lewis notably uses the phrase "minutely scaled monumentality" to describe the sheer volumetric grandeur of Moderno's finest small works.

347 Ibid., 105–107.

348 Barbieri 2012, 25–58. Although formally established for a nine-year term, the partnership's operations were cut short around 1535 following the untimely death of the Brescian cousin, Giovanni Battista Mondella. At that time, his surviving brothers, Luigi and Giovanni Maria, stepped in to settle the society's finances with their Veronese cousin.

349 For Giambattista's activity as a print publisher, notably his ***excudebat*** on Fontana's ***Way to Calvary***, see B. Jestaz, "Un fonds d'atelier de Battista del Moro (1573)," ***Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*** 44 (2000), 293; and M. Bury, "New Light on Battista del Moro as a Printmaker," ***Print Quarterly*** 20 (2003), 129.

eventually fractured, plunging Giambattista into severe financial distress. By 1535–1536, his Brescian cousins brought a massive lawsuit against him, claiming a debt of 1,000 ducats. The bitter dispute dragged on until November 28, 1543, when a settlement was finally reached: Giambattista acknowledged a reduced debt of 300 scudi, paying 100 scudi upfront and settling the remainder by ceding property leases.[350]

This decade of intense financial pressure provides a highly logical explanation for the ultimate, widespread dissemination of Galeazzo's models. To satisfy his crippling debts, Giambattista almost certainly began liquidating his father's precious original matrices and wax models to competing foundries. This explains why, precisely during the 1530s, reasonable quality casts of Galeazzo's models suddenly appear on luxury bronze utensils produced by the Paduan workshop of Desiderio da Firenze (fig. 73), and why Galeazzo's *Dubia Fortuna* composition was appropriated to serve as a supporting prop on a bronze *Griffin Centaur* from the workshop of Severo da Ravenna (who died before 1538).[351]

In hindsight, it becomes clear that Galeazzo deliberately orchestrated part of his own immortality. He was no longer a goldsmith receiving commissions but was a patriarch securing a dynasty. Whether his models were carried across the Alps by his enterprising pupil, pressed into the leather bindings of elite bibliophiles, or potentially sold off by his son to settle family debts, Galeazzo ensured his inventions would outlive his mortal hands. When he passed away in 1528, he left behind a prolific, indestructible visual language that would continue to echo across the bronze foundries, aristocratic cabinets, and royal courts of Europe for centuries to come.

350 For the 1535-1536 lawsuit for 1,000 ducats and the final November 28, 1543 settlement for 300 scudi, see Boselli 1977.

351 For the diffusion of Moderno's models into the Paduan workshops of Desiderio da Firenze and Severo da Ravenna, see Lewis 1989, 105-141; and Riddick 2023a.

IX.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE BRAND

The death of Galeazzo Mondella in 1528 did not mark the end of his artistic influence; rather, it signaled the beginning of one of the most extraordinary posthumous legacies in the history of Renaissance art. Because Galeazzo had so brilliantly optimized his compositions for serial reproduction, his visual language transcended the confines of his own workshop, his native Veneto, and his own lifetime. His matrices, models, and casts saturated the European market, becoming an indispensable, shared visual vocabulary for artists working across virtually every medium for the next five centuries.

One of the most profound testaments to the volumetric grandeur of Galeazzo's miniature reliefs is how frequently they were scaled up by monumental sculptors and architects. In Northern Italy, his compositions were translated into stone to decorate some of the most prestigious architectural projects of the era, including the Porta della Rana at the Cathedral of Como (carved by the Rodari brothers before 1507), the façade of the Carthusian monastery in Pavia, the funerary chapel of Bartolomeo Colleoni in Bergamo, and the monumental doors of the Palazzo Stanga in Cremona.

This architectural appropriation quickly crossed the Alps. Even before his pupil Matteo del Nassaro entered the French royal court, Galeazzo's models were already circulating in the Loire Valley: by 1508–1513, his *David Triumphant Over Goliath* was carved into the cloister of Saint-Martin in Tours.[352] When Nassaro finally arrived in France around 1518, the royal appetite for his master's designs only intensified. Around 1519, Galeazzo's *Hercules and Antaeus* and *Hercules and Cacus* were immortalized as monumental stone reliefs adorning the façade of King Francis I's lodges at the Château de Blois (fig. 74).[353]

Fig. 74: Stone sculptural relief after Galeazzo Mondella's *Hercules and Antaeus* composition featured along the façade of King Francis I's lodges at the Château de Blois, b. 1519.

Galeazzo's classicizing aesthetic proved particularly intoxicating to the master enamelers of France, whose brilliantly colored, vitreous artworks for the Valois court relied heavily on Italian Renaissance prints and plaquettes. Perhaps the earliest dated reproduction of a plaquette in Limoges enamel features Galeazzo and Nassaro's *Lion Hunt*, faithfully reproduced on a vibrant plaque bearing the monogram of the renowned royal enameler Léonard Limosin, dated 1539.[354]

Other elite Limoges workshops eagerly followed suit. The enigmatic Master K.I.P. utilized Galeazzo's celebrated *Battle Scene* composition as the primary model for the grisaille enamel panels of a magnificent silver casket, and meticulously reproduced the same motif around the body of a rare, enameled vase. Furthermore, Galeazzo's *David Triumphant Over Goliath* was adapted by an anonymous French master (possibly Jean

352 For the 1508–1513 carving by Bastien François at the cloister of Saint-Martin in Tours, see Jules Roussel, ***La sculpture française: époque de la Renaissance*** (Paris, 1932), 26, pls. 31 and 39. See also Lewis 1989, 136, note 192.

353 For Moderno's plaquettes reproduced in stone at the Château de Blois, see Bertrand Bergbauer, ***Images in Relief. La Collection de Plaquettes du Musee National de la Renaissance*** (Paris: Editions de la Reunion des musees nationaux, 2006), 28.

354 For the reproduction of Moderno's works in French painted enamels—including Léonard Limosin's 1539 ***Lion Hunt*** and the anonymous ***David Triumphant Over Goliath*** (Victoria and Albert Museum, Inv. C-2459-1910)—see Riddick 2019.

Pénicaud II or III), who cleverly transformed his coralline tree into a natural landscape while retaining the powerful central figure. This vitreous translation was not limited to France; Venetian enamelers also reproduced his works, crafting an exquisite, enameled bowl that featured his *Battle Scene* composition and a pax featuring his *Pietà* composition in enamel.[355]

The sheer ubiquity of Galeazzo's inventions meant they were absorbed into the daily material culture of the Renaissance in astonishing ways. Bronze foundries appropriated his designs for utilitarian objects. As earlier noted, his *Allegory of Victory* and *Mars and Victory* were cast onto a bronze baptismal font in Chalon-sur-Saône in 1520.[356] His *Hercules and the Nemean Lion* was boldly embossed onto the back of a mid-sixteenth-century Italian leather target shield (now in the Wallace Collection),[357] while other foundries utilized his models to decorate the flanks of heavy bronze mortars. A spectacular early instance of this is an imposing mortar cast in 1571 by the Orléanais founder Hector Lescot (now preserved at the Faculté de Pharmacie in Paris), which features a rich decorative program incorporating Galeazzo's *Hercules and Antaeus* alongside various other European medals and reliefs.[358] The enduring appeal of this specific composition in France is evidenced by its continued circulation well into the seventeenth century, appearing, for example, on a 1635 mortar attributed to the Burgundian founder known as the Maître de l'ange Rullier.[359]

Fig. 75: Detail of a choir seat at Pamplona Cathedral, after Moderno's *Standing Hercules and the Nemean Lion*, executed by Esteban de Obray and workshop, 1541.

355 Walters Art Museum, Inv. 44–125.

356 For the 1520 Chalon-sur-Saône font and the 1486 bell at Stenico Castle, see Bertrand Bergbauer, *Les Mortiers Français en Bronze du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle* (PhD thesis, Université de Picardie Jules Verne, 2012), vol. I, 109, and vol. II, 317; and Riddick 2019.

357 For the mid-sixteenth-century embossed leather target shield, see Warren 2014, 859, fig. 319.

358 For the 1571 Hector Lescot mortar, see Bergbauer (2012), vol. I, 115, and vol. II, cat. A1656.

359 For the 1635 Maître de l'ange Rullier mortar, see Bergbauer (2012), vol. II, cat. A141.

Fig. 76 (facing page): Terracotta relief of the *Penitent Saint Jerome*, anonymous, 16th century (private collection).

The translation of Galeazzo's models extended well beyond metalwork, finding prominent application in monumental and decorative woodcarving throughout Europe. His designs were particularly favored by craftsmen seeking authentic *all'antica* motifs for ecclesiastical and domestic furnishings. In Spain, his *Standing Hercules and the Nemean Lion* was reproduced in relief on a choir seat at Pamplona Cathedral, executed by Esteban de Obray and his workshop in 1541 (fig. 75). Similarly, a French carved wood coffer dated 1546 (now in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris) prominently features a freehand copy of this same *Standing Hercules* composition.[360] The dissemination of his Herculean subjects in France is further evidenced by a large, carved wooden door from Orléans (c. 1520–1530, today in the Victoria and Albert Museum), which reproduces his models—including the *Cacus* plaquette—on its tympanum.[361] Religious compositions were also scaled up for woodcarvers; most notably, a large sixteenth-century wooden reproduction of his complex *Crucifixion* plaquette is preserved today in the Musei Civici in Padua.[362]

Artists working in entirely different disciplines mined Galeazzo's bronzes for inspiration, with his matrices serving as direct graphic sources for major Northern Renaissance and Italian painters well beyond his death. The painter Girolamo da Treviso quoted Moderno's *Saint Sebastian* for his 1487 *Madonna del Fiore*,[363] while Sebastiano Florigerio relied on Moderno's highly emotive *Pietà* for the figure of Christ in his 1533 altarpiece

Fig. 77: Bronze plaquette of *Samson Destroying the Temple*, ambit or workshop of Galeazzo Mondella, ca. 1508-12 (Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, inv. B140).

in Rovigo.[364] North of the Alps, Hans Burgkmair embedded several of Galeazzo's plaquettes into the background of his 1528 painting *Esther before Ahasuerus*,[365] and Lucas Cranach the Elder utilized *Hercules and Antaeus* as the direct model for his circa 1530 painting of the subject.[366] As Attilio Troncavini observed, the complex architecture in the plaquette of *Samson Destroying the Temple* (fig. 77) was reproduced in *The Story of Samson*, painted by Jörg Breu the Elder between 1525 and 1530 (fig. 78).[367] Even his devotional works achieved

360 For the 1546 carved wood coffer featuring the ***Standing Hercules and the Nemean Lion*** (Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris), see Riddick 2019, citing Bertrand Bergbauer.

361 For the carved wooden door from Orléans featuring Herculean labors (Victoria and Albert Museum, London, inv. 674–1895), see Riddick 2019; and Bergbauer 2012, vol. I, 113–14.

362 The large sixteenth-century copy in wood is housed in the Museo d'Arte, Arti Applicate e Decorative (inv. 1673), Padua. See Warren 2014, 843.

363 For Girolamo da Treviso's 1487 ***Madonna del Fiore***, see Lewis 1989, 114; and Warren 2014, 837.

364 For Sebastiano Florigerio's 1533 altarpiece in Rovigo, and the composition's foreshadowing of Paolo Veronese's later work, see Lewis 1989, 131, and 135, note 131.

365 For Hans Burgkmair's 1528 ***Esther before Ahasuerus***, see Warren 2014, 819 and 858.

366 For Lucas Cranach the Elder's c. 1530 painting of ***Hercules and Antaeus***, see Warren 2014, 857.

367 Attilio Troncavini, email communication (2025).

Fig. 78 (facing page): Oil-on-panel painting of *Samson Destroying the Temple* by Jörg Breu the Elder, ca. 1525-30 (Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland).

incredible longevity in paint, with his *Pietà* serving as the compositional basis for a circa 1550 painting by the Master of the Prodigal Son, as earlier discussed (fig. 37).[368] In manuscript illumination, Narziss Renner painted seven of Galeazzo's plaquette designs into the borders of Matthäus Schwarz's 1521 prayer book in Augsburg.[369] Finally, Galeazzo's *Flagellation* plaquette was translated into paint by the Florentine artist Bacchiacca (Francesco Ubertini) in a panel now preserved in Washington.[370]

Perhaps most fascinating are the unique, highly personalized adaptations of his work across eclectic materials. A contemporary sculptor modeling a terracotta figure of Saint Jerome ingeniously embedded a cast of Galeazzo's *Pietà* directly into the clay to serve as the saint's devotional icon (fig. 76).[371] The same composition was also reproduced on an early maiolica tabernacle-pax.[372] Elsewhere, an elite sportsman commissioned an ivory archer's wrist-cuff intricately carved with the figure of Galeazzo's *Small Saint Sebastian*. Given Saint Sebastian's widespread veneration as the patron saint of European archers' and crossbowmen's confraternities, the carving transformed a functional piece of sporting equipment into a brilliant, tactile play on the iconography of arrows.[373] This martial and sporting translation of Galeazzo's models extended well beyond his lifetime; his dynamic composition of *Mars and Victory*, for instance, was prominently adapted to decorate a carved stag horn powder flask dating to circa 1600 (fig. 79).[374]

Fig. 79: Carved stag horn powder flask with a design after Moderno's *Mars and Victory*, ca. 1600 (Royal Armoury,Leeds, UK, inv. XIII 120).

In Germany, the famed Nuremberg foundry of Peter Vischer the Younger recognized the solemn majesty of Moderno's religious works. When casting the monumental bronze coffin plate for Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg in 1540, the Vischer workshop prominently featured pristine reproductions of Galeazzo's *Entombment* alongside his classical busts of *Medusa*, proving that Galeazzo's ability to seamlessly synthesize antiquity

368 For the Master of the Prodigal Son's c. 1550 adaptation (National Gallery, London, inv. NG 1860), see Warren 2014, 850.

369 For Matthäus Schwarz's 1521 prayer book in Augsburg, see Georg Habich (1910), 20, Taf. 17.2; and Warren 2014, 762-764.

370 For Bacchiacca's painted *Flagellation* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, inv. 1952.5.81) as a "softened reproduction" of Moderno's plaquette, see Lewis 1989, 138, note 242.

371 Cambi casa d'Aste, 18 November 2015, lot 70.

372 Hampel auction, 17 May 2003, lot 247.

373 For Saint Sebastian's role as the patron saint of European archers and crossbowmen, see Irene Vaslef, *The Role of St. Roch as a Plague Saint: A Late Medieval Hagiographic Tradition* (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1984), as cited in Boeckl 2000, 35; and Marshall, "Reading the Body," 240.

374 Royal Armouries, Leeds, Inv. XIII 120.

and Christian theology resonated at the highest levels of the European clergy.[375] This same *Medusa* motif was likewise incorporated on a pair of small mortars attributed to an anonymous founder active between Saumur and Angers, France during the mid-seventeenth century.[376]

The afterlife of Galeazzo's matrices extends astonishingly into the modern era, proving the immortality of his "brand." In 1675, the *Dubia Fortuna* square battle plaquette was reproduced as a copperplate engraving (*Desultor Militaris*) in Joachim von Sandrart's monumental *L'Academia Todesca.* By the nineteenth century, his works were simultaneously revered and forged; the famous nineteenth-century Parisian jeweler and art restorer Alfred André possessed a high-quality wax impression of Galeazzo's *Hercules and the Nemean Lion* cartouche, which he deceptively appropriated onto a gilt copper locket setting (sold at Sotheby's in 1999).[377] The enduring commercial power and adaptability of Galeazzo's compositions are further evinced in the appropriation of his reliefs for mass production on eighteenth-century Wedgwood ceramics.[378]

Even more remarkably, the commercial reproduction of his devotional works survived into the industrial age. Sandro Ubertazzi has brought to light a 1910 trade catalog for the Bertarelli company in Milan that actively advertised newly manufactured, commercial reproductions of

Fig. 80: Choker-necklace with a bronze plaquette of *Nessus Abducting Deianira*, ca. 1501-08, by Galeazzo Mondella, set in a precious gilt clasp with velvet neckband by gallerist and jewelry designer, Gabriela Sismann (Paris, France).

Galeazzo's *Pieta* to be sold as liturgical paxes for nineteenth- and twentieth-century churches.[379]

Today, Galeazzo Mondella's aesthetic remains actively appreciated by contemporary goldsmiths. The Parisian art gallerist Gabriela Sismann has recently appropriated genuine antique plaquettes by Moderno, mounting them into sophisticated, twenty-first-century women's jewelry (fig. 80). Furthermore, modern enameled gold reproductions of his *Small St. Sebastian* plaquette can still be found glimmering in the windows of Italian jewelry stores. It is a fitting, ultimate testament to the Veronese master: half a millennium after he first pressed his designs into wax, Galeazzo Mondella's profound synthesis of antiquity and modernity continues to captivate the jeweler's eye.

375 For the 1540 Vischer coffin plate of Cardinal Albrecht von Brandenburg, see Cecil Headlam, ***The bronze founders of Nuremberg: Peter Vischer and his family*** (London, 1906), 122-23; and Warren 2014, 845, fig. 313.

376 For the Medusa mortars from the Saumur/Angers region, see Bergbauer 2012, vol. II, cats. A1646 and A1647.

377 Andrea Daninos, ***Una bella cera? Ritrattini in cera del Cinquecento tra collezionismo e falsificazione in Il Falso Specchio della Realta***, ex. cat., curated by Anna Ottani Cavina and Mauro Natale. Fondazione Federico Zeri, Universita di Bologna (2017), 187-197.

378 For the eighteenth-century Wedgwood reproduction of ***Hercules and the Nemean Lion*** in jasperware (today in the British Museum, inv. PE 1909,1201.220), see Aileen Dawson, ***Masterpieces of Wedgwood in the British Museum*** (London, 1984), 49–50; and Warren 2014, 860.

379 For the 1910 Bertarelli catalogue (***Catalogo generale della ditta F.lli Bertarelli; forniture generali per chiese***, n. 106, Capriolo e Massimino, Milan, 1910) advertising modern casts of the Moderno pax, see Ubertazzi 2025.

TIMELINE

THE EARLY YEARS: FORMATION AND THE MANTUAN CONNECTION

- **1467**: Born in Verona into the Mondella family of goldsmiths.
- **1485** (March): Recorded for the first time in the Verona goldsmiths' guild (*Arte degli Orefici*) at the age of eighteen.
- **1490**: Creates the *Madonna and Child with Saints Anthony Abbot and Jerome* pax (bearing the inscribed date 1490 and the inscription "MANTVA").
- **1496–1497**: Serves his first term as *massaro* (president) of the Verona goldsmiths' guild.
- **c. 1497–1498**: Moderno's brother, Giroloamo, serves a term as *massaro o*f the Verona goldsmiths' guild.
- **1501**: Recorded in the Verona tax registry (*estimo*) in Santa Maria in Organo. His eldest brother, Lancillotto, dies. Moderno's brother, Antonio Donato, is operating a workshop in Brescia.
- **c. 1502–1503**: Possible active presence in Milan.
- **1504** (November 20): Exact date inscribed on the obverse of his *Maddalena Mantuana* medal, suggesting a Veronese and Mantuan presence.
- **1506**: Birth of Moderno's son, Giambattista, out of wedlock to his housekeeper.
- **1507**: *Terminus ante quem* for his designs reproduced in marble on the Porta della Rana at Como Cathedral.

THE ROMAN WINDOW, MILAN, AND LATE CAREER

- **1508** (May): Settles the accounts of his *massaria* with his brother Girolamo who may have succeeded Moderno in that role (once again), ensuring the *apotheca* in Verona is taken care of while Moderno travels to Rome.
- **1512**: His brother Girolamo dies.
- **1513**: The date inscribed on the *Pietà* pax housed in the Mantua Cathedral suggests a possible presence in Milan.
- **c. 1473–1477**: His father, Luigi, passes away.
- **c. 1485–1490**: Operates primarily between Verona and Mantua, developing a classical style alongside his Mantuan counterpart, Antico.

WORKSHOP REORGANIZATION AND REGIONAL EXPANSION

- **1496** (January): The family convenes to divide the dowry of his mother, Iacoba. The joint family workshop in the *bina aurificum* is dissolved. Galeazzo establishes his own independent operation, leasing a house in perpetuity in the Veronese *contrada* of Santa Maria in Organo.
- **c. 1496–1497**: Spends at least two weeks documented in Venice, initiating contact with elite Venetian circles.
- **c. 1496–1499**: The young Veronese Matteo del Nassaro undergoes his musical training in Mantua, establishing his initial presence in the Gonzaga court orbit.
- **1502**: Registered independently from his brothers in the Verona *estimo*. Moderno is likely present in Brescia around this time, working from his brother Antonio Donato's workshop and coinciding with the Brescian woodcarver Stefano Lamberti's inspired *Pietà* motif after Moderno's design on an altarpiece frame for San Francesco.
- **c. 1503–1505**: Matteo del Nassaro probably begins his artistic apprenticeship under Moderno in gem-engraving and model-making.
- **By 1505**: His brother Antonio Donato (who had relocated to Brescia following the 1496 settlement) dies. Moderno pays rent to the monastery of Santa Maria in Organo for family lands in Castelrotto.
- **1506–1507**: Serves his second term as *massaro* of the Verona. goldsmiths' guild.
- **1508–1512**: The intense Roman period. Moderno runs the papal *Piombo* (lead seals), studies the newly discovered *Laocoön* and the *Domus Aurea*, and executes the Grimani silver reliefs.
- **1512** (July): Matteo del Nassaro, having worked with Niccolò Avanzi in Rome, visits Isabella d'Este in Mantua to deliver an amended emerald of *Christ at Calvary*.

- **1514–1515**: Matteo del Nassaro is active in Milan, executing hardstone commissions under the continued patronage of Isabella d'Este.
- **1516–1517**: Present in Verona. Following the restoration of Venetian rule, he is elected to the reinstated *Consiglio Comunale* (city council) in 1517 at the age of 50.
- **1518**: Matteo del Nassaro departs for France to serve at the court of King Francis I.
- **1524** (November 6): Contracts with Torello Saraina and the *Società della Concezione* in Verona to oversee a sculptural project carving four tufa statues and two marble Madonnas for a chapel in San Fermo.
- **1528** (May 5): Dictates his own will at his home in Santa Maria in Organo.
- **1528** (November 18): His son, Giambattista (now aged 22), officially forms a commercial partnership with his Brescian cousins (Giovanni Maria, Giovanni Battista, and Luigi Mondella) to trade in jewels and precious metals. This trans-regional firm begins disseminating Moderno's models posthumously under the *Comites Confectores*.

- **1513–1514**: Proposed tenure in Milan, likely overseeing the production of works that heavily feature Lombard/Sforza decorative vocabularies.
- **1515**: Moderno is listed in the estimo in Verona.
- **1517**: Moderno's artistic judgment is sought to oversee the cloister capitals carved by Francesco da Porlezza for Santa Maria in Organo.
- **1521**: A silver pax of the *Pietà* (now in the Hermitage) is dated and inscribed for a Veronese patron.

FINAL YEARS AND POSTHUMOUS LEGACY

- **1527**: Serves as a witness to the will of the miniaturist Liberale da Verona.
- **1528** (Before November 18): Moderno dies.
- **1535**: The commercial partnership between Giambattista and his cousins is officially dissolved following the untimely death of the Brescian cousin Giovanni Battista Mondella.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AGOSTI, Giovanni. *Sui gusti di Altobello Averoldi*, in *Il Polittico Averoldi restaurato*, catalogo della mostra a cura di G. Agosti e E. Lucchesi Ragni, Brescia 1991, pp. 55-80.

ALBERTI, Leon Battista. *De re aedificatoria.* Florence, 1485.

ALLEN, Denise. "Riccio's Bronze Narratives: Context and Development." In *Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze*, edited by Denise Allen and Peta Motture, 15–40. London: Philip Wilson Pub., 2008.

ALLEN, Denise, Linda Borsch, James David Draper, Jeffrey Fraiman, and Richard E. Stone, eds. *Italian Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2022.

AVESANI, Rino. "La cultura veronese agli inizi della dominazione veneta." In *Verona e il suo territorio*, Vol. 4, 5–30. Verona: Istituto per gli Studi Storici Veronesi, 1984.

BANGE, Ernst. *Die Italienischen Bronzen der Renaissance und des Barock, Zweiter Teil: Reliefs und Plaketten*. Berlin, 1922.

BARBIERI, Alessandro. "Il Reliquiario della Santissima Croce del tesoro del Duomo Vecchio di Brescia." *Arte Lombarda* 164-165 (2012): 25-58.

BARKER, Sheila. "The Making of a Plague Saint." In *Piety and the Plague*, 90–131. Kirksville, 2007.

BARTLETT-RAWLINGS, Bryony. "Re-visioning St. Sebastian: Nicoletto da Modena's Reworked Engravings of St. Sebastian." *Venezia Arti*, n.s., 28 (2019): 31–40.

BECK, Gustav. "Norditalienische Plaketteneinbände der 1. Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts und ihr Bezug zu Grolier." PhD diss., Universität Hamburg, 1984.

BELOZERSKAYA, Marina. *Luxury Arts of the Renaissance.* Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005.

BELTING, Hans. *Giovanni Bellini: Pietà.* Frankfurt am Main, 1985

BERGBAUER, Bertrand. *Images en relief : la collection de plaquettes du Musée national de la Renaissance*. Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 2006.

BERGBAUER, Bertrand. "Moderno et les peintres: Autour des derives anversois d'une plaquette italienne." *Revue de l'Art* 167 (2010): 31–40.

BERGBAUER, Bertrand. "Les mortiers français en bronze du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle : production, iconographie et diffusion." PhD diss., Université de Picardie Jules Verne, 2012.

BERNICK, Elizabeth H. "Drawing Connections: New Discoveries Regarding Cesare Da Sesto's Sketchbook." *Master Drawings* 57, no. 2 (2019): 147–196.

BERTOLOTTI, Antonino. *Le arti minori alla corte di Mantova.* Milan, 1889.

BIADEGO, Giuseppe. "L'arte degli orefici in Verona." *Memorie dell'Accademia di agricoltura, arti e commercio di Verona* 66 (1890–1891).

BODE, Wilhem von."Funde." *Kunstchronik* 15 (1903-1904): 269-270.

BODE, Wilhem von. *Konigliche Museen zu Berlin, Beschreibung der Bildwerke der Christlichen Epochen, vol. II, Die Italienischen Bronzen.* Berlin, Germany, 1904.

BOECKL, Christine. *Images of Plague and Pestilence: Iconography and Iconology*. Kirksville, 2000.

BOLLA, Margherita. *Verona Romana*. Sommacampagna: Cierre edizioni, 2014.

BOSELLI, Camillo. *Regesto artistico dei notai roganti in Brescia dall'anno 1500 al 1560*. Vol. 1. Brescia, 1977.

BOSIO, Luigi. *Tesori d'arte nella terra dei Gonzaga*. Exhibition catalogue (Mantua). Milan, 1974.

BOTTARI, Gianfranco. *Prime ricerche su Giovanni Antonio Panteo*. Messina, 2003.

BRESCIANI, A. M. *La pittura in Verona*. Verona, 1586.

BROWN, Clifford M. *La Grotta di Isabella d'Este.* Mantua, 1985.

BROWN, Clifford M. "The Archival Scholarship of Antonino Bertolotti: The Galeazzo Mondella (Moderno) Model for a Diamond Saint George Brooch." *Artibus et Historiae* 18, no. 35 (1997): 65–71.

BRUGNOLI, Pierpaolo. "Intorno a due cappelle dedicate alla Madonna: i Banda e i della Torre." In *I Santi Fermo e Rustico. Un culto e una chiesa in Verona*, edited by P. Golinelli and C. Gemma Brenzoni, 289–293. Verona, 2004.

BURNS, Howard. "Le antichità di Verona e l'architettura del Rinascimento." In *Palladio e Verona*, edited by P. Marini, 103–117. Venice: Neri Pozza, 1980.

BURY, Michael. "New Light on Battista del Moro as a Printmaker." *Print Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (June 2003): 123–130.

CANNATA, Pietro. *Rilievi e placchette dal XV al XVIII secolo.* Rome: Museo di Palazzo Venezia, 1982.

CAPWELL, Tobias. "A Dress Sword of the Italian Renaissance." In *The Noble Art of the Sword: Fashion and Fencing in Renaissance Europe 1520–1630*. London: Wallace Collection, 2012.

CASTOLDI, M. *Rime per Laura Brenzoni Schioppo*. Bologna, 1994.

CENNI, Nino, and Maria Fiorenza Coppari. *I segni della Verona veneziana (1505-1620)*. Verona: Cassa di risparmio di Verona, 1990.

CHIAPPA, Bruno. "Nuovi documenti sugli orefici Mondella e in particolare sulla produzione artistica di Galeazzo." In *Una vita per i musei, atti della giornata di studio in ricordo di Lanfranco Franzoni*, edited by M. Bolla, 107–119. Verona, 2016.

Christie, Manson & Woods. *A Collection of Objects of Art including... Bronze Plaquettes... formed by Alfred Higgins Esq*. Sale catalogue. London, January 29, 1904.

COHEN, Simona. "Elisabetta Gonzaga and the Ambivalence of Scorpio in Medieval and Renaissance Art." *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 13, no. 3 (Winter 2018): 408–446.

COLLARETA, Marco. "Pace." In *Maestri della scultura in legno nel ducato degli Sforza*, 156-157. Cinisello Balsamo, 2005.

CUNNALLY, John. "The Portable Pantheon: Ancient Coins as Sources of Mythological Imagery in the Renaissance." In *Images of the Illustrious: The Numismatic Presence in the Renaissance*, 123–128. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

CUPPERI, Walter. *Pinacoteca Civica di Vicenza. Scultura e arti applicate dal XIV al XVIII secolo*. Milan, 2005.

DAMIANAKI ROMANO, Chrysa. "Zuan Zorzi Lascaris Called Pyrgoteles: A Greek Sculptor in Renaissance Veneto." *Thesaurismata* 28 (1998): 93–127.

DANINOS, Andrea. "Una bella cera? Ritrattini in cera del Cinquecento tra collezionismo e falsificazione." In *Il Falso Specchio della Realtà*, edited by Anna Ottani Cavina and Mauro Natale, 187–197. Bologna: Fondazione Federico Zeri, Università di Bologna, 2017.

DAWSON, Aileen. *Masterpieces of Wedgwood in the British Museum*. London: British Museum Publications, 1984.

DOMINGUEZ LEAL, J. M. *Torello Saraina, Origen y engrandecimiento de la ciudad de Verona*. Zaragoza: Instituto de Estudios Humanisticos, 2006.

FABRIS, Matteo. "Le chiese e gli ospedali degli orefici a Verona." *Studi Veronesi. Miscellanea di studi sul Rinascimento* 2 (2017).

FAMULARO, Jordan. "Gems and the Media of Italian Art, ca. 1450–ca. 1550." PhD diss., 2020.

FICINO, Marsilio. *De vita coelitus comparanda* (Book III of *De triplici vita*). 1489.

FRANCHINUS, Gaffurius. *De harmonia musicorum instrumentorum opus* (Milan: Gotardum Pontanum, 1518).

FRANCO, Maria Teresa. "La Flagellazione del Moderno per il 'nobilissimo studiolo' Grimani." *Ricche Minere* 17 (2022): 33–53.

GAGETTI, Elisabetta. "Das Höchste dieser Art: Laocoonte in miniatura." In *La statuaria di marmo: La sfida dell'antico* (2007): 153–155.

GASPAROTTO, Davide. "Antico e Moderno." In *Bonacolsi l'Antico: Uno scultore nella Mantova di Andrea Mantegna e di Isabella d'Este*, 89-97. Milan: Electa, 2008a.

GASPAROTTO, Davide. "Antico versus Moderno." In *L'Industria Artistica del Bronzo del Rinascimento*, edited by M. Ceriana and V. Avery, 91. Verona: Scripta, 2008b.

GAURICUS, Pomponius. *De sculptura* (1504). Edited and translated by André Chastel and Robert Klein. Geneva: Droz, 1969.

GLASER, Curt. "Eine Zeichnung Hans Holbeins." *Monatshefte für Kunstwissenschaft* 2 (1909): 314-316.

GUZZO, Enrico Maria. "Risarcimento di Antonio Badile." *Arte Cristiana* 81 (1993): 200–202.

GUZZO, Enrico Maria. "Falconetto." In *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 44, 345–346. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1994.

GUZZO, Enrico Maria. "Scheda 10.1." In *Mantegna e le Arti a Verona 1450-1500*, 93–95. 2006.

GUZZO, Enrico Maria. "Ricerche sul Rinascimento veronese: Antonio Badile, Michele, Girolamo dai Libri." In *Magna Verona vale. Studi in onore di Pierpaolo Brugnoli*, edited by Andrea Brugnoli and Gian Maria Varanini, 341–370. Verona, 2008.

HACKENBROCH, Yvonne. *Enseignes: Renaissance Hat Jewels*. Florence: S.P.E.S., 1996.

HABICH, Georg. "Das Gebetbuch des Matthäus Schwarz." *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 8th session (1910).

HEADLAM, Cecil. *The Bronze Founders of Nuremberg: Peter Vischer and His Family*. London: George Bell and Sons, 1906.

HILL, George Francis. "The Whitcombe Greene Plaquettes." *The Burlington Magazine* 30 (1917): 103–110.

HIND, Arthur M. *Nielli. Chiefly Italian of the XV. Century Plates, Sulphur Casts and Prints preserved in the British Museum*. London, 1936.

HIND, Arthur M. *Early Italian Engraving: A Critical Catalogue with Complete Reproductions of All the Prints Described*. London, 1938–1948.

HOBSON, Anthony. *Humanists and Bookbinders: The Origins and Diffusion of the Humanistic Bookbinding 1459–1559, with a Census of Historiated Plaquette and Medallion Bindings of the Renaissance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

HOLANDA, Francisco de. *Da Pintura Antigua*. 1549.

JESTAZ, Bertrand. "Un fonds d'atelier de Battista del Moro (1573)." *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz* 44, no. 2/3 (2000): 293–302.

KEIZER, Joost. "Portrait and Imprint in Fifteenth-Century Italy." *Art History* 38, no. 1 (2015): 10–37.

KNAPTON, Michael. "Venice and the terraferma." In *The Italian Renaissance State*, edited by A. Gamberini and I. Lazzarini, 132–146. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

KRAHN, Volker. "Riccio's Formation and Early Career." In *Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze*, edited by Denise Allen and Peta Motture, 3–14. London: Philip Wilson Pub., 2008.

KRISTELLER, Paul. *Andrea Mantegna*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1901.

KRYZA-GERSCH, Claudia. "Why Antico Matters." In *Antico: The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes*, edited by E. Luciano, 15–26. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2011.

LAMOUCHE, Emmanuel. Bronzes, plaquettes et médailles in *Splendeurs médiévales. La collection Duclaux révélée (catalogue d'exposition, Angers, Musée des Beaux-arts, 9 novembre 2018 – 24 février 2019)*, Ville d'Angers (2018).

LAW, John Easton. "The Commune of Verona Under Venetian Rule from 1405 to 1455." PhD diss., University of Oxford, 1974.

LEINO, Marika, and Charles Burnett. "Myth and Astronomy in the Frescoes at Sant'Abbondio in Cremona." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 66 (2003): 273–288.

LEINO, Marika. *Fashion, Devotion and Contemplation: The Status and Functions of Italian Renaissance Plaquettes*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2013.

LEITHE-JASPER, Manfred, ed. *Ruhm und Sinnlichkeit: Innsbrucker Bronzeguss 1500–1650, von Kaiser Maximilian I. bis Erzherzog Ferdinand Karl*. Innsbruck: Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, 1996.

LEVENSON, J. A., et al**.** *Early Italian Engravings from the National Gallery of Art*. Washington, D.C., 1973.

LEWIS, Douglas. "The Medallic Oeuvre of 'Moderno': His Development at Mantua in the Circle of 'Antico'." In *Italian Medals*, 77-97. Studies in the History of Art 21. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1987.

LEWIS, Douglas. "The Plaquettes of 'Moderno' and His Followers." In *Italian Plaquettes*, 105-141. Studies in the History of Art 22. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989.

LEWIS, Douglas. "Collectors of Renaissance Reliefs: Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466–1536) and Baron Boissel de Monville (1763–1832)." In *Collecting Sculpture in Early Modern Europe*, 128–143. Studies in the History of Art 70. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2008.

LEWIS, Douglas, and Amy Struble. "A new redemptive symbolism in Moderno's plaquettes." *The Medal* 72 (2018): 42–55.

LEWIS, Douglas. *National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue: Renaissance Plaquettes*. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, forthcoming.

LOPATO, Marina. *Western European Plaquettes, XV-XVII Centuries, in the Hermitage Collections* [Zapadnoevropeiskie Plaketki XV-XVII vekov v sobranii ermitazha: Katalog vystavki]. Leningrad, 1976.

LUCCO, Mauro, Peter Humfrey, and Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa. *Giovanni Bellini. Catalogo ragionato*. Edited by Mauro Lucco. Quinto di Treviso, 2019.

LUCIANO, Eleonora. "Antico: Pier Jacopo Alari Bonacolsi (c. 1455–1528)." In *Antico: The Golden Age of Renaissance Bronzes*, edited by E. Luciano, 1–14. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2011.

LUZIO, Alessandro. "Isabella d'Este e il sacco di Roma." *Archivio storico lombardo* 35 (1908): 413–425.

MACLAGAN, Eric. *Catalogue of Italian Plaquettes*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1924.

MALGOUYRES, Philippe. "L'Antico et l'art de la médaille: le travestissement biographique à l'antique à la cour de Gianfrancesco Gonzaga." In Rivista italiana di numismatica e scienze affini, CXVIII, 2017, 199-215.

MALGOUYRES, Philippe. *De Filarete à Riccio: Bronzes italiens de la Renaissance (1430–1550)*. Paris: Louvre éditions, 2020.

MELCHIORRE, Matteo. *Conoscere per governare: Le relazioni dei Sindici Inquisitori e il dominio veneziano di terraferma (1543-1626)*. Ladispoli: Forum, 2013.

Metropolitan Museum of Art. *The Robert Lehman Collection, Vol. 12: European Sculpture and Metalwork*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011.

MIAZZO, Lucia. "Il restauro della Pace del Moderno, 1513 (?)." In *Restituzioni 2013*, [Insert Page Range]. Turin: [Intesa Sanpaolo], 2013.

MIDDELDORF, Ulrich, and Oswald Goetz. *Medals and Plaquettes from the Sigmund Morgenroth Collection*. Chicago, 1944.

MIGEON, Gaston. La collection de M. Gustave Dreyfus, V: Les plaquettes. In *Les Arts* 80 (August 1908).

MIGEON, Gaston. *Catalogue des bronzes & cuivres*. Paris: [Musée national du Louvre/Publisher], 1904.

MIGEON, Gaston. "La collection de M. Paul Garnier." *Les Arts* 53 (1906): 13-24.

MOLINIER, Émile. *Les Bronzes de la Renaissance. Les plaquettes*. Vol. 1. Paris: J. Rouam, 1886.

MORSE, Margaret A. "The Arts of Domestic Devotion in Renaissance Italy: The Case of Venice." PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2006.

MOTTURE, Peta. "Riccio and the Bronze Statuette as an Art Form." In *Andrea Riccio: Renaissance Master of Bronze*, edited by Denise Allen and Peta Motture, 64–80. New York: The Frick Collection; London: Philip Wilson Pub., 2008.

NAGEL, Alexander. *The Controversy of Renaissance Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.

NEGRO, Emilio. *Deposition of Jesus in the Tomb*. Written expertise. Pistoia: Numero 7 Antiquariato, 2020.

PALMER, Alison Lee. "The Walters' Madonna and Child Plaquette and Private Devotional Art in Early Renaissance Italy." *The Journal of the Walters Art Museum* 59 (2001): 73–84.

PANOFSKY, Erwin. *Herkules am Scheidewege*. Leipzig and Berlin, 1930.

PENNY, Nicholas. *The Sixteenth-Century Italian Paintings, Volume I: Paintings from Bergamo, Brescia and Cremona*. London: National Gallery Company, 2004.

PFISTERER, Ulrich. *Lysippus und seine Freunde: Liebesgaben und Gedächtnis im Rom der Renaissance oder: Das erste Jahrhundert der Medaille*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008.

POPE-HENNESSY, John."The Italian Plaquette." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 50 (1964): 63-85.

POPE-HENNESSY, John. *Renaissance Bronzes from the Samuel H. Kress Collection*. London: Phaidon Press, 1965.

POPE-HENNESSY, John. "The Study of Italian Plaquettes." In *Italian Plaquettes*, edited by Alison Luchs, 19–32. Studies in the History of Art 22. Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1989.

PUTELLI, Romolo. *Vita, storia*. Vol. 2. [City: Publisher], 1934–1935.

RACZYNSKI, Atanazy. *Les Arts en Portugal*. Paris, 1846.

RANDALL, Richard H., Jr. "An Image de Chevet." *Bulletin of the Walters Art Gallery* 20 (1968).

REINACH, Salomon. *Pierres gravées*. Paris, 1895.

RICCI, Seymour de. *The Gustave Dreyfus Collection. II: Reliefs and Plaquettes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1931.

RICHTER, Thomas. *Paxtafeln und Pacificalia: Studien zu Form, Ikonographie und liturgischem Gebrauch* (Weimar: VDG, 2003)

RIDDICK, Michael. "Glyptics, Italian Plaquettes in France and their Reproduction in Enamel." Renbronze.com, (2019).

RIDDICK, Michael. "Galeazzo Mondella's original Entombment." Renbronze.com, (2020).

RIDDICK, Michael. "Moderno & Associated Makers – A Partnership Between Galeazzo Mondella's Son and Nephews." Renbronze.com, (2023a).

RIDDICK, Michael. "A Nativity Attributed to Niccolò Avanzi." Renbronze.com, (2023b).

RIDDICK, Michael. "Proposing Matteo del Nassaro as the Master of the Orpheus and Arion Roundels." Renbronze.com, (2024a).

RIDDICK, Michael. "The Battle of Cannae Medal – A German-Italian Crossover?" Renbronze.com, (2024b).

RIDDICK, Michael. "Reapproaching the Coriolanus Master." Renbronze.com, (2025).

RIDDICK, Michael. "From Sacred Silver to Secular Steel: The Master IO.F.F." Renbronze.com, (2026).

ROBICHAUD, Denis J. J. "Ficino on Force, Magic, and Prayers: Neoplatonic and Hermetic Influences in Ficino's Three Books on Life." *Renaissance Quarterly* 70 (2017): 44–87.

ROGNINI, Luciano. "Precisazioni sulle origini dei Caroto e di Matteo dal Nassaro." *Vita Veronese* 27, nos. 11–12 (1974): 336–340.

ROGNINI, Luciano. "Galeazzo e Girolamo Mondella artisti del Rinascimento veronese." *Atti e Memorie della Accademia di Agricoltura Scienze e Lettere di Verona*, s. VI, XXV (1975): 95–119.

ROGNINI, Luciano. "Notizie su Angelo Falconetto, Giampaolo Cimerlini e Giambattista Mondella." In *Palladio e Verona*, edited by Paola Marini, 328–329. Verona, 1980.

ROSSI, Francesco. *Placchette e rilievi di bronzo nell'età del Mantegna*. Mantua: Skira, 2006.

ROSSI, Francesco. *La Collezione Mario Scaglia – Placchette*. 3 vols. Bergamo: Lubrina Editore, 2011.

ROSSI, Umberto. "Il medaglista Lysippus, nipote del medaglista veronese Cristoforo di Geremia." *Archivio Storico dell'Arte* (1893).

ROUSSEL, Jules. *La sculpture française : époque de la Renaissance.* Paris, 1932.

SARAYNA, Torello. *De origine et amplitudine civitatis Veronae. Eiusdem De viris illustribus antiquis Veronensibus*. Verona: Antonio Putelleti, 1540.

SAUVAGE, Marine. "Matteo del Nassaro : un artiste véronais polyvalent à la cour de François Ier." Master's thesis, Université de Liège, 2019.Sava, Giuseppe. "Giovanni Antonio Falconetto pittore di 'belli animali, e frutti': una pergamena miniata a Rovereto." In "Nuovi Studi", 17, 2011, 19-27.

SAXL, Fritz. "Pagan Sacrifice in the Italian Renaissance." *Journal of the Warburg Institute* 2, no. 4 (1939): 346–367.

SCHNEEBALG-PERELMAN, Sophie. "Richesses du Garde-Meuble Parisien de François Ier: inventaires inédits de 1542 et 1551." *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 78, no. 1234 (1971): 253–304.

SCHWEIKHART, Gunter. *Le antichità di Verona di Giovanni Caroto*. Verona, 1977.

SENA CHIESA, Gemma, ed. *Il Tesoro di San Nazaro, Antichi Argenti Liturgici dalla Basilica di San Nazaro al Museo Diocesano di Milano*. Silvana Editoriale, 2009, 27-54.

SLAVAZZI, Fabrizio. *Il Tesoro di San Nazaro, Antichi Argenti Liturgici dalla Basilica di San Nazaro al Museo Diocesano di Milano*. Silvana Editoriale, 2009, 55-61.

SPENCER, John R. "Two Bronze Plaquettes by Moderno." *Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin* 27, no. 1 (Fall 1969): 2–11.

STONE, Richard E. "Italian Renaissance and Baroque Sculptors in Bronze: The Differentiation of Their Hands through the Study of Their Casting Techniques." In *Italian Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes in The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, edited by Denise Allen et al., 25–46. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2022.

TAGLIAFERRI, Amelio. *L'economia veronese secondo gli estimi dal 1409 al 1635*. Milan: Giuffrè, 1966.

TANZI, Marco. "Tra scultura e pittura: il paradosso di Brescia." In *Teatri del sacro e del dolore: I Compianti in legno e in terracotta in Lombardia e in Piemonte tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, edited by R. Dionigi and F. M. Ferro, 91–97. Soncino, 2020.

TOSI, Giovanna. "Verona Romana. I monumenti romani di Verona nella tradizione letteraria veronese del Cinquecento." In *Palladio e Verona*, edited by P. Marini, 33–84. Venice: Neri Pozza, 1980.

TRONCAVINI, Attilio. "La Capsella di San Nazaro e il Moderno." *Antiqua nuova serie* (2018).

TRONCAVINI, Attilio. "Il Moderno e i rapporti con Andrea Pisano e Firenze." *Antiqua nuova serie* (2020).

UBERTAZZI, Sandro. "A proposito di un gruppo di paci derivate da una Pietà del Moderno." *Antiqua nuova serie* (2025).

U.S. Department of Interior. *Gazetteer of Italian Geographic Names*. Washington, D.C., 1956.

VASARI, Giorgio. *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori*. Florence: Giunti, 1568.

VASARI, Giorgio. *Le vite de' più eccellenti pittori*. Edited by Gaetano Milanesi. Florence, 1880.

VASARI, Giorgio. *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors & Architects*. Translated by Gaston du C. De Vere. 10 vols. London: Macmillan and Co. & The Medici Society, 1912–1915.

VASLEF, Irene. The Role of St. Roch as a Plague Saint: A Late Medieval Hagiographic Tradition (Ph.D. diss., The Catholic University of America, 1984).

VECCE, Carlo. "'The Sculptor Says': Leonardo and Gian Cristoforo Romano." In *Illuminating Leonardo: A Festschrift for Carlo Pedretti*, edited by [Constance Moffatt and Sara Taglialagamba], 231. [Leiden: Brill], 2016.

Vente Paul Garnier. Sale catalogue. Paris, December 18-23, 1916.

VENTURELLI, Paola. "Cellini, gli orefici milanesi a Roma, Caradosso e Leonardo." In *Leonardo da Vinci e le arti preziose*, 145-157. Venice, 2002.

VENTURELLI, Paola. "La 'Pace del Moderno' del Museo Diocesano Francesco Gonzaga di Mantova." *OADI – Osservatorio per le Arti Decorative in Italia* (2012).

WARBURG, Aby. *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity*. Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 1999.

WARREN, Jeremy. *Medieval and Renaissance Sculpture in the Ashmolean Museum*. Vol. 3, *Plaquettes*. Oxford: Ashmolean Museum Publications, 2014.

WARREN, Jeremy. *The Wallace Collection. Catalogue of Italian Sculpture*. The Trustees of the Wallace Collection, 2016.

WEINRYB, Ittai. *The Bronze Object in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.

WINTER, Patrick de. "A Little-known Creation of Renaissance Decorative Arts: The White Lead Pastiglia Box." *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte* 14 (1984): 7–131.

WIXOM, William D. *Renaissance Bronzes from Ohio Collections*. Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1975.

ZANI, Vito. "Una copia del Sacrificio del Mausoleo Martinengo e alcune note iconografiche e stilistiche." *Antiqua nuova serie* (2013).

ZANI, Vito. *Gasparo Cairano: Compianto su Cristo morto*. Milan: Carlo Orsi Antichità, 2022.

ZANI, Vito. Scheda 74. In *Il corpo e l'anima*, 258–259. 2021.

ZAMPERINI, Alessandra. "I Caroto e fra Giovanni da Verona." In *Le vite dei Veronesi di Giorgio Vasari. Un'edizione critica*, edited by M. Molteni and P. Artoni, 69–83. Treviso, 2013.

Index of Names


MODERN